NATION

SC pulls up ED for misusing PMLA to keep accused in jail

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BUSINESS

Adani withdraws from $1B Lanka power deal

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SPORTS

Rajat Patidar named RCB captain for IPL 2025

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SALAR
DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

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City woman fined for using laptop while driving

BENGALURU, 13 FEB

Police fined a woman in Bengaluru after a video of her operating a laptop while driving went viral. Deputy Commissioner of Police (Traffic), North Division, Siri Gowri D R shared the video on social media on Wednesday afternoon with the comment, "Work from home, not from the car while driving". According to police, the woman was fined Rs 1,000 for grossly violating traffic rules.—*PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Murmu to visit Karnataka, Jharkhand

NEW DELHI, 13 FEB

President Droupadi Murmu is set to embark on a two-day visit to Karnataka and Jharkhand, commencing this Friday, according to an official announcement. During her visit, President Murmu will attend the inaugural session of the 10th International Women's Conference, hosted by the Art of Living in Bengaluru. This key engagement underscores her commitment to promoting women's empowerment and development. On 15 February, she will address the platinum jubilee celebrations of Birla Institute of Technology (BIT) Mesra in Ranchi, furthering her initiatives in education and innovation. —*PTI*

Indians among 260 rescued in Myanmar

BANGKOK, 13 FEB

Some 260 people, including some Indians, believed to have been trafficked and trapped into working in online scam centres are to be repatriated after they were rescued from Myanmar, Thailand's army announced. The army said that those rescued in the most recent operation came from 20 nationalities — with significant numbers from Ethiopia, Kenya, the Philippines, Malaysia, Pakistan and China. There were also nationals of Indonesia, Nepal, Taiwan, Uganda, Laos, Brazil, Burundi and Tanzania—*PTI*

After 2 yrs of strife, Manipur now under President's rule

Manipur Assembly has been put under suspended animation

NEW DELHI, 13 FEB

President's rule was imposed in strife-torn Manipur on Thursday and the Assembly put under suspended animation, days after Chief Minister N Biren Singh resigned from his post that led to political uncertainty.

The Manipur Assembly, which has a tenure till 2027, has been put under suspended animation.

Singh, who was heading the BJP government in Manipur, resigned as chief minister on 9 February after nearly 21 months of ethnic violence that has claimed over 250 lives so far.

The decision to impose the central rule was taken after the governor sent a report to President Droupadi Murmu.

The notification by the President said powers of the legislature of the state shall be exercisable by or under the authority of Parliament.

It also said any reference in the Constitution to the governor shall, in relation to Manipur be construed as a reference to the President.

The decision to impose the President's rule by the BJP-led Centre came as the party failed to have a consensus chief ministerial candidate despite having several rounds of discussions between party's northeast in-charge Sambit Patra and party legislators.

Patra had met Bhalla a few times before Thursday's decision by the central government that comes at a time when Prime Minister Narendra Modi is in the US.

The governor has already declared the seventh session of the 12th Manipur Legislative assembly, which was set to commence on February 10, as null and void.

The last session of the assembly in the restive state concluded on 12 August, 2024.

The ethnic violence that erupted in May 2023 saw brutal clashes between the majority Meitei community in the Imphal Valley and the Kuki-Zo tribal groups in the surrounding hills, resulted in over 250 deaths and displaced thousands of people.

The state's inability to contain it raised serious concerns about Singh's leadership. The Congress Thursday said it has been demanding imposition of President's rule in strife-torn Manipur for the past 20 months and the Central government did so only after the fabric of state's society was allowed to be "severely damaged".

Security agencies have been put on high alert in Manipur to counter any mischief by banned terror groups here following imposition of President's rule in the state, officials said Thursday.—*PTI*

Security personnel stand guard following imposition of President's rule, in Imphal, Manipur PHOTO: PTI

Modi meets US' Gabbard to discuss 'intelligence'

WASHINGTON, 13 FEB

Prime Minister Narendra Modi met the newly appointed Director of National Intelligence in the Donald Trump administration Tulsi Gabbard, and discussed India-USA friendship, of which he said, she has been a "strong votary".

Modi also congratulated Hindu-American Gabbard on her confirmation as the nation's top intelligence official. She was confirmed on Wednesday.

Discussions also focused on enhancing intelligence cooperation in counter-terrorism, cybersecurity and emerging threats, Ministry of External Affairs official spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said in a post on X.

Modi will be hosted by the US President on Thursday in what would be the first bilateral talks between the two leaders after Trump assumed the presidency for a second term last month.

He will also meet with billionaire businessman Elon Musk at the White House.

Modi's meeting with the Tesla and SpaceX owner will happen before the prime minister hold bilateral talks with US President Donald Trump.

The prime minister reached Washington DC on Wednesday night.

PM Modi and Elon Musk have met several times. PM Modi also toured the Tesla facility in San Jose during a visit in 2015. The Tesla CEO had given him a personal tour of the Tesla plant.

The Prime Minister will also meet Indian-American billionaire entrepreneur Vivek Ramaswamy.

Modi is staying at the Blair House, the US presidential guest house at the heart of the American capital city.

Modi's visit to the American capital comes days after the Trump administration deported 104 Indians in handcuffs and shackles on a military aircraft that sparked outrage in India. —*PTI*

>>>*More on Page 3*

USA's Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard with Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Washington DC PHOTO: PTI

Trump to sign reciprocal tariffs on trading nations

WASHINGTON, 13 FEB

President Donald Trump announced on Thursday that he will sign an order increasing US tariffs to match the rates charged by other countries. In a post on his social media site, Truth Social, he declared, "TODAY IS THE BIG ONE: RECIPROCAL TARIFFS!!! MAKE AMERICA GREAT AGAIN!!!" Experts warn that such significant tariff hikes could destabilise the global economy, heightening inflation while potentially harming U.S. consumers. The President's recent tariff threats have escalated tensions with trading partners, including Canada, Mexico, and China, who are preparing their own retaliatory measures. Details on what constitutes "reciprocal" tariffs remain unclear amid the ongoing trade friction. —*PTI*

AMID UPROAR

Waqf JPC report with Oppn dissent notes tabled in RS

NEW DELHI, 13 FEB

The joint parliamentary committee report on the Waqf Amendment Bill, 2024 was tabled in the Rajya Sabha on Thursday amid demands for its withdrawal and a brief adjournment of the proceedings followed by a heated debate between the treasury and opposition benches.

Opposition MPs led by Leader of Opposition Mallikarjun Kharge alleged that dissent notes were deleted from the report, a charge denied by Union Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju.

A corrigendum to Appendix 5 of the report was also tabled in the House during the post-lunch sitting, prompting the opposition to claim that it was done under their pressure.

Chapter 5 of the Appendices of the report pertains to "notes/minutes of dissent received from the Members of the Joint Committee", and contains the notes that were redacted in the earlier tabled report.

Many opposition members stood from their seats and some trooped towards the chairman's podium, pressing for the report's withdrawal

Chairman Dhankhar named Samirul Islam, Nadimul Haque and M Mohamed Abdulla for creating "chaos and disruption in the House". Kharge was then called to speak.

Union Minister for Environment Bhupender Yadav quoted rules and said the JPC chairman can expunge words, expressions and phrases from the dissent note if they are inappropriate and unparliamentary.

The Congress' Syed Nasir Hussain accused Rijiju of misleading the House and said, "My own dissent note has been redacted." Rijiju reiterated that the report had all annexures and nothing was taken out. The opposition MPs then staged a walkout. —*PTI*

NEW INCOME TAX BILL INTRODUCED

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman introduced the Income Tax Bill, 2025, in the Lok Sabha on Thursday and urged Speaker Om Birla to refer it to a select committee of the House. Opposition members opposed the Bill at the introduction stage but the House passed a motion by voice vote for its introduction. While moving the Bill for introduction, Sitharaman urged Birla to refer the draft law to a select committee of the House, which will submit its report by the first day of the next session. She urged the speaker to take a call on the proposed panel's omposition and rules.

Pak troops violate ceasefire in J&K, suffer casualties

JAMMU, 12 FEB

Pakistani troops on Wednesday reportedly breached the ceasefire with unprovoked firing on Indian positions along the Line of Control (LoC) in the Poonch district of Jammu and Kashmir, leading to a robust response from the Indian Army, security officials stated. The extent of the damage on the Pakistani side remains unclear, although officials indicated "heavy casualties" were inflicted.

The Indian Army, in an official statement, said the ceasefire along the Line of Control (LoC) is intact and continues to be observed as per the understanding between both the armies.

This incident marks the first ceasefire violation of the year and the fifth cross-border incident in just a week. The firing occurred in the Krishna Ghati sector, following the tragic death of two Indian Army personnel, including a captain, in an improvised explosive device (IED) blast by suspected terrorists in the Akhnoor sector.

The firing from across the border was described as unprovoked by Indian officials. A junior commissioned officer (JCO) in the Indian Army suffered minor injuries from a landmine explosion during a patrol, and was subsequently evacuated to a military hospital. —*Agencies*

METAL BIRDS FLY HIGH

IAF's Surya Kiran Aerobatic Team performs manoeuvre on the fourth day of the Aero India 2025 at the Yelahanka Airforce Bas in Bengaluru on Thursday PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD

AFTER PUBLIC FURY

Metro to rethink 'few steep' fare hikes

BENGALURU, 13 FEB

The Managing Director of Bangalore Metro Rail Corporation Limited (BMRCL), M Maheshwar Rao, has indicated potential adjustments to recently increased Metro fares following widespread criticism. The fare hike, in some instances exceeding 100 per cent, has prompted intervention from

The BMRCL announced the revision of its fare structure, capping the maximum stage-wise fare increase at 71 per cent. However, the base fare and the highest ticket price will remain unchanged at 10 and 90, respectively.

During a press conference, Rao clarified that while there would be no overall fare revision, a 'calibration' of certain fare stages could occur to alleviate the burden on commuters. "The calibration proposed by BMRCL aims to provide relief to 46 per cent of travellers without undermining the provisions of the Metro Railways (Operation and Maintenance) Act," he stated.

Reports revealed that some passengers who previously paid Rs 18 are now facing fares of Rs 40, while those paying Rs 22 are now charged Rs 50. Rao emphasised that BMRCL intends to correct errors in fare calculations, which could benefit approximately three lakh daily riders out of the 7.5 to 8.5 lakh journeys made.

Following feedback from the public and calls from senior officials to review the fare hike, the BMRCL Board convened meetings to discuss the matter. Rao noted that fare-fixation committee recommendations are binding as per the Metro Railways Act and insisted that the fare increase was not intended for financial gain but to manage substantial loan repayments and operational costs.

He stressed the necessity of ongoing capital investment to ensure efficient service delivery, indicating that the Metro will always operate at a loss and requires government subsidies. A BMRCL statement contrasted the current fare structure with that of Delhi and Mumbai Metro systems, criticising the relevance of direct comparisons due to changes since their fare structures were last updated. —*PTI*

Reports revealed that some passengers who paid Rs 18 are now facing fares of Rs 40, while those paying Rs 22 are now charged Rs 50 PHOTO: PTI

The way BMRCL has implemented the Metro fare revision has led to anomalies, with fares more than doubling in certain sections. Commuters' interests must be safeguarded

-Siddaramaiah, Chief Minister

Odia rapper dies by suicide in Bengaluru

BENGALURU, 13 FEB

A 32-year-old Odia rapper died by suicide after consuming poison at his rented apartment in Kadubeesanahalli, police said on Thursday. The incident occurred on the night of 9 February, police added. Abhinav Singh had arrived in Bengaluru just seven days ago and was working for a private company. After having dinner with his roommate, he returned to his room and allegedly consumed poison, according to the police. No suicide note was recovered, a senior police officer said. "We do not yet know what kind of poison he consumed and are awaiting a report from the Forensic Science Laboratory," police said. According to his family, he was being harassed by his wife, the police added.
—PTI

ACP booked for assault on wife, illicit affair

BENGALURU, 13 FEB

A senior police officer, an Assistant Commissioner of Police (ACP) in the city's South-East, Cyber Economic and Narcotics (CEN) department, is facing serious allegations of assault and infidelity following a complaint from his wife. She has accused him of engaging in an illicit affair with a female batchmate, which she claims has brought distress and embarrassment to their family. In her complaint, the wife alleged that upon confronting him about the affair, he assaulted her and has since been avoiding family life. The police have registered a First Information Report (FIR) and launched an investigation into the case.
—Salar News

Activists protesting GIMs ties with Israel detained

BENGALURU 13 FEB

Eleven activists from various human rights and student organisations were detained by the police while addressing a press meet outside the Global Investors Meet 2025 (GIM 2025) in the city. The activists were taken into custody at Sadashiv Nagar police station from 12.30pm to 5.30pm under preventive detention. The press meet aimed to criticise the Karnataka Government's collaboration with Israel at GIM 2025. The detained activists represented groups such as People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL), All India Students Association (AISA), and Fridays For Future Karnataka.
—Salar News

Villager trampled by elephants in Saraguru

MYSURU, 13 FEB

In a tragic incident in Mysuru, 24-year-old Avinash was trampled to death by three wild elephants at Gadde Halla in Saraguru taluk early on Thursday. The young man was working in his agricultural field when the elephants, having strayed from the forest in search of fodder, attacked him. Upon learning of the incident, local police and forest officials were met with anger from the victim's family and villagers, who blamed them for failing to prevent such man-animal conflicts. They demanded compensation for both Avinash's death and for the crop losses they had suffered due to wild animal incursions. The forest department later launched an operation to drive the elephants back into the forest, while Saragur Police have registered a case.
—Salar news

Invest K'taka: Volvo to open Rs 1,400 cr unit in Hoskote

JSW bags 'Investor of the Decade'; air taxi grabs attention

The initiative, formalised in the presence of Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, will increase production capacity from 3,000 to 20,000 buses and trucks annually
PHOTO: @MBPatil/X

BENGALURU, 13 FEB

The Invest Karnataka-2025 summit is spotlighting significant advancements in the state's industrial landscape. Sweden's Volvo Group has announced a substantial investment of ₹1,400 crore to expand its manufacturing plant in Hoskote, near Bengaluru. This initiative, formalised in the presence of Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, will increase production capacity from 3,000 to 20,000 buses and trucks annually, generating new jobs and strengthening Karnataka's position in the global supply chain. Volvo CEO Martin Lundstedt further highlighted Bengaluru as the company's fourth largest international hub, employing over 3,500 individuals across research and development, procurement, and logistics.

Meanwhile, JSW Group was honoured as the "Investor of the Decade" at the same summit, recognising its substantial investment of over 1 lakh crore in Karnataka. Managing Director Parth Jindal stated that the group has significantly contributed to the state's manufacturing and infrastructure development, underlining a commitment to fostering industrial innovation and job creation.

The summit also showcased Sarla Aviation's innovative air taxi, 'Shunya', which has generated considerable buzz. Dinesh, one of the founders, indicated plans to commence operations within 18 months pending regulatory approvals. Designed to ferry six passengers at speeds of up to 250 km/h, the air taxi aims to reduce travel times across congested urban environments, further enhancing Bengaluru's appeal as a modern metropolis. The summit will continue until 14 February at Bangalore Palace. *—PTI*

Global aerospace giants eye major sourcing expansion

BENGALURU, 13 FEB

Global giants Airbus, Rolls-Royce, Safran, and Collins Aerospace are looking to significantly scale up sourcing from India, key officials from the four companies said on Thursday.

Speaking at a panel discussion on "India at the Core: Shaping the Future of Global A&D Sourcing" during the Global Investors' Meet - Invest Karnataka 2025, they expressed confidence in India's prospects within the global aerospace and defence supply chain.

Srinivasan Dwarakanath, Director General of the Aerospace India Association and former CEO and MD of Airbus India said that both Boeing and Airbus in their global market forecast have stated that over the next 20 years, there will be a demand for more than 42,000 new aircraft. "In 2023, the value of the global aerospace supply chain was about USD 180 billion and by 2033 it will go up to USD 250 billion," Dwarakanath said. *—PTI*

2020 CASE

Need more UAPA courts: SC denies bail in B'luru riots

NEW DELHI, 13 FEB

The Supreme Court of India has denied bail to several individuals accused in a case under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) related to the 2020 Bengaluru riots, opting not to intervene in the ongoing investigation by the National Investigation Agency (NIA).

However, the court expressed concerns over the significant delay in commencing the trial due to a shortage of special UAPA courts in Karnataka. A bench, comprising Justices BV Nagarathana and SC Sharma, instructed the Karnataka government to establish additional special courts specifically for UAPA cases. The court mandated that this be accomplished within three months.

Approximately 150 accused individuals, associated with the Social Democratic Party of India (SDPI), sought bail, arguing that the prolonged trial delays hindered their cases. The court was informed about the hefty backlog of NIA cases in Karnataka, attributed to the inadequate number of courts. Although the central government's Home Ministry and the Karnataka High Court had previously urged the state to set up more courts, compliance has been lacking.

PHOTO: PTI

- Approximately 150 accused individuals, associated with the Social Democratic Party of India (SDPI), sought bail, arguing that the prolonged trial delays hindered their cases.

The case stems from violent protests that erupted in Bengaluru in 2020, which resulted in three fatalities and injuries to nearly 60 police personnel. The accused are alleged members of the SDPI and the Popular Front of India (PFI). *—ANI*

AERO INDIA DAY 4

Fighter jets draw a heart-shaped trail in the sky

BEL delivers RBE2 radar to Thales

BENGALURU, 13 FEB

Bharat Electronics Ltd (BEL), a Navratna Defence PSU, has achieved a significant milestone by producing its 7,000th transmit/receive (T/R) module for the RBE2 radar deployed on the Dassault Aviation Rafale. The module has been delivered to Thales, reinforcing the company's commitment to the 'Make in India' initiative.

Thales, headquartered in Noida, has actively engaged with the Indian government's 'Make in India' policy since it delivered the first RBE2 AESA radar with domestically manufactured components by BEL in November 2020.

Surya Kiran Aerobatic Team performs maneuvers on the fourth day of the Aero India 2025 in Bengaluru
PHOTOS: MOHAMMED ASAD

The delivery of the 7,000th module marks a notable advancement in their ongoing collaboration.

BEL's partnership with Thales has also expanded to include the production of advanced microwave modules for the Rafale's SPECTRA Electronic Warfare suite. The T/R modules are essential for the RBE2 radar's active electronic scanning capabilities, allowing for high-speed steering of the radar beam, comparable to the speed of an electronic chip. This achievement is seen as an intermediate milestone in a long-term and successful collaboration between the two companies.
—PTI

BJP MP Tejasvi Surya takes a sortie in HTT 40 aircraft; Traffic congestion on roads amid Day 4 of the Aero India show at Yelahanka Airbase

2 kill City man for 'staring' at them

BENGALURU, 13 FEB

A puncture shop owner was fatally assaulted by two men in Bengaluru after being accused of staring at them. The tragic incident occurred on 9 February but was only reported to the authorities following a complaint from the victim's family.

The deceased Noorullah, was a resident of Mangammanapaly .Authorities have arrested Prakash, 32, and Kumaregowda, 35. According to reports, Noorullah and his assistant, Manikantha, had closed their shop and were on their way to a tea stall in Hosur Road around 11.30pm. They decided to examine discarded tyres on the roadside. Prakash and Kumaregowda, who were nearby, misidentified them as thieves and confronted them.

Despite Noorullah and Manikantha's explanations, the situation escalated when the pair accused Noorullah of staring at them.

They then attacked him with iron rods. *—Salar News*

BJP, JD(S) clash amid Jevargi municipal polls

KALABURAGI, 13 FEB

A violent clash erupted between BJP and JD(S) workers during the elections for the president and vice-president of the Jevargi Municipal Council. The incident occurred on Wednesday.

The 23-member municipal council was initially dominated by the BJP, which secured 17 seats. However, in a surprising turn of events, over seven BJP members defected to support JD(S), sparking a physical altercation between party workers. JD(S) candidates emerged victorious, with Gurulingappa Gowda Malipatil elected as president and Gangubai Satkar as vice president. In response, BJP leaders—including MLA Basavaraj Mattimood and MLC BG Patil—staged a protest, claiming that police had unfairly detained Congress members, which disadvantaged the BJP during the elections. *—Salar News*

Seven BJP members defected to support JD(S), sparking a physical altercation between party workers
PHOTO: SALAR

CELEBRATED FOLK SINGER

Padma Shri awardee Sukri dies

BENGALURU, 13 FEB

The cultural landscape of Karnataka has suffered a significant loss with the passing of Padma Shri awardee Sukri Bommagowda, a celebrated folk singer from the Halakki Vokkaliga tribe in Ankola. She died in her home around 4am on Thursday at the age of 91, following a brief illness and recent treatment in a private hospital in Mangaluru.

Bommagowda was revered for her impressive repertoire of over 5,000 folk songs, playing a crucial role in the preservation of tribal music traditions. Her accolades included the prestigious Nadoja Award from Hampi University in 2006 and the Janapada Shri, alongside her Padma Shri in 2017. An ardent anti-liquor activist, she spearheaded initiatives against the rampant sale of alcohol in her village decades ago.

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah expressed his condolences on social media, stating, "The loss to the cultural world due to the demise of renowned folk singer Sukri Bommagowda cannot be compensated." He praised her as a "born artist," highlighting her contributions to Halakki folk music and her exemplary life. Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar referred to her as the "Nightingale of Folk Music," while Union Minister H D Kumaraswamy lamented her death as a profound loss to Karnataka's cultural heritage. *—PTI*

'Innocents shouldn't be troubled in Mysuru unrest'

MYSURU, 13 FEB

Former minister and Congress MLA Tanveer Sait urged the Mysuru city police to avoid troubling innocent individuals as they investigate the recent attack on the Udayagiri police station. Speaking to reporters, he expressed dissatisfaction with the police's delayed response to a youth who posted derogatory comments about the Prophet Muhammad, which incited a large gathering of young people demanding immediate action.

Sait pointed out that the protests were not a response to derogatory posts about political figures like Rahul Gandhi and Akhilesh Yadav but were specifically in defence of the Prophet Muhammad, emphasising the emotional significance of the issue. He noted that the police's inaction in filing a First Information Report (FIR) contributed to the escalation of tensions, ultimately leading to the attack on the police station.

While Sait called for a thorough investigation into the individuals behind the offensive posts, he also insisted that police action should focus on those directly involved in the violence, rather than targeting innocent bystanders.

Congress leader defends claims of RSS role

M Lakshmana, spokesperson for the Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee, affirmed his allegations regarding the involvement of RSS activists

MAN THROWN OFF MOVING TRAIN

BENGALURU 13 FEB

An unidentified man was thrown off a moving train by two passengers within the Yeshwanthpur railway police station limits, the police said.

According to officials from the Railway Police Force (RPF), the identity of the deceased has not yet been ascertained.

The police have arrested two suspects. The incident occurred around 1am on a Bidar-bound train from Yeshwanthpur. The altercation reportedly began when the victim was found sleeping in the passageway near the toilet, obstructing access to the washroom. The confrontation escalated into a brawl, during which the two accused allegedly assaulted the man before pushing him off the moving train near Gauribidanur. *—Salar News*

Court defers decision on case against Bansuri

NEW DELHI, 13 FEB

A Delhi court would on 20 February decide whether to take cognisance of a criminal defamation complaint filed by AAP leader Satyendra Jain against BJP MP Bansuri Swaraj. Additional chief judicial magistrate Neha Mittal on Thursday reserved the order after hearing arguments on the issue. Jain has alleged that Swaraj made defamatory remarks against him during an interview on a TV channel on 5 October, 2023. Swaraj, he said, falsely claimed that Rs 3 crore were recovered from his house aside from 1.8kgs gold and 133 gold coins. The remarks were made by Swaraj and to gain undue political advantage, his complaint said. *—PTI*

Former Sena (U) MLA quits party, joins Sena

MUMBAI, 13 FEB

Former Shiv Sena (UBT) MLA Rajan Salvi on Thursday joined the Shiv Sena led by Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde. The move is seen as a jolt to party chief Uddhav Thackeray. In a letter to Thackeray on Wednesday, Salvi said, "In the prevailing circumstances and amid the internal politics within the organisation, I won't be able to do justice to my post. Accepting moral responsibility for my defeat, I am resigning as the deputy leader of the party." Salvi, who represented the Rajapur assembly constituency in Ratnagiri district from 2009-2024, lost the November 2024 assembly polls to Shiv Sena's Kiran Samant. Salvi had quit as a deputy leader of Sena (UBT) on Wednesday. The coastal Konkan region, including Ratnagiri, was once a party stronghold. *—PTI*

YSRCP leader Vamsi arrested in Hyderabad

AMARAVATI/ HYDERABAD, 13 FEB

Andhra Pradesh police arrested YSRCP leader Vallabhaneni Vamsi in Hyderabad, pertaining to a case related to the attack on TDP Gannavaram office. He was booked under different sections of BNS and SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act. Vamsi was picked up from an apartment complex at Rayadurgam in Hyderabad's Hi-Tech city area and is being shifted to Vijayawada from the neighbouring state. Meanwhile, YSRCP alleged that the arrest was illegal as he had secured an anticipatory bail. "Vamsi is on anticipatory bail. Satyavardhan has also withdrawn his petition," said YSRCP on X. They further asked how long this brand of vengeful politics will go on for, claiming that the he is being targeted. *—PTI*

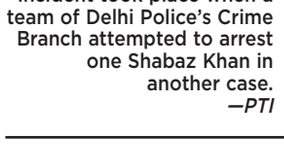


PHOTO: ANI

Court protects Khan from arrest till 24 Feb

NEW DELHI, 13 FEB

A Delhi court on Thursday granted protection from arrest till 24 February to AAP MLA Amanatullah Khan for allegedly attacking a police team in Jamia Nagar in the national capital on 10 February. Special judge Jitendra Singh ordered Khan to join probe in the case whenever directed by the investigating officer. The court also directed police to bring all the documents aside from any CCTV footage related to incident before the court on 24 February.
The police said the mob led by Khan helped a proclaimed offender, an accused in an attempt-to-murder case, escape from custody. It said incident took place when a team of Delhi Police's Crime Branch attempted to arrest one Shabaz Khan in another case. *—PTI*

Temples next: Opposition on Waqf report

Mallikarjun Kharge called the report fake and said it should be withdrawn and sent back to a panel

NEW DELHI, 13 FEB

The joint parliamentary committee report on the Waqf Amendment Bill, 2024, was tabled in the Rajya Sabha on Thursday amid demands for its withdrawal and brief adjournment of the proceedings following a heated debate between the treasury and opposition benches.

Opposition MPs led by Leader of Opposition Mallikarjun Kharge alleged that dissent notes were deleted from the report, a charge denied by Union Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju.

Opposition MPs claimed the report of the joint committee of Parliament on the Waqf bill sought to open the floodgates for targeting land belonging to temples, churches and gurudwaras. They also questioned redacting certain portions of the dissent notes submitted by opposition members of the panel. Union Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju said certain portions that cast aspersions on the committee had been removed and added that it was done according to rules.Calling it a "fake report", Kharge said it should be withdrawn and sent back to a committee. The MPs are protesting not for personal reasons but because of the injustice being done to a community, he said. Congress' Syed Nasir Hussain, a member of the panel, told reporters on the Parliament premises that the report was "completely biased and one-sided". "Today it is Waqf, tomorrow it will be about gurdwara land, then temples... They want to snatch the land and give it to their friends," he said. TMC member Nadimul Haque condemned the report and said a bill to stop encroachment on Waqf properties was withdrawn. AAP's Sanjay Singh, also a member of the panel, said rules were not followed during its meetings.

"The proceedings turned into a joke, those who are not stakeholders were called and we, who were members of the panel, our perspectives, our dissent, was not even included in the report. It is a violation of parliamentary conventions," he said. *—PTI*

Union Minister Kiren Rijiju speaks in the Rajya Sabha during the Budget session of Parliament, in New Delhi on Thursday *PHOTO: PTI*

NATIONAL LITIGATION POLICY NOT FINALISED, GOVT TELLS RS

NEW DELHI, 13 FEB

The Indian government announced on Thursday that the much-anticipated National Litigation Policy, aimed at accelerating the resolution of outstanding cases, has yet to be finalised. In a written response to the Rajya Sabha, Law Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal highlighted that the Central government has implemented various initiatives to encourage alternative dispute resolution mechanisms in an effort to decrease litigation.

Upon assuming office last year, Meghwal endorsed the draft policy, which is expected to be presented to the Union Cabinet for approval.

The National Litigation Policy has been subject to multiple drafts over the years, with various administrations considering its structure. *—PTI*

Budget to drive growth and boost investment: FM

NEW DELHI, 13 FEB

- ASitharaman also highlighted India's resilience during the Covid, which saw the nation become fifth largest economy

Indian Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman presented the goals of the Union Budget 2025-26, which focuses on accelerating growth, ensuring inclusive development, and boosting private sector investments. Speaking in the Rajya Sabha, she acknowledged the challenges faced during the Budget's preparation, particularly due to unforeseen external factors.

Sitharaman remarked on the dynamic nature of economic trends, stating, "There are no models that you can build and understand how the trends will be because they are very dynamic." Despite the uncertainties, she assured that the government's assessments prioritised India's interests. She stated that critical imports for the economy are still fraught with uncertainty, yet emphasized that sectoral allocations have not been reduced.

The effective capital expenditure for the upcoming fiscal year is projected at Rs 19.08 lakh crore. The finance minister referred to the first advance estimates from the National Statistics Office (NSO), which forecast a 6.4 per cent growth in real terms and a 9.7 per cent rise in nominal terms for India's economy.

Sitharaman also highlighted India's resilience during the Covid crisis, which saw the nation become the fifth largest economy globally. She drew parallels with the aftermath of the 2008 global financial crisis when India was classified as one of the "fragile five." *—PTI*

Erdogan calls for India-Pak dialogue on Kashmir

ISLAMABAD, 13 FEB

In a visit to Islamabad on 13 February, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan emphasised the need for dialogue between India and Pakistan to resolve the Kashmir issue, while considering the aspirations of the Kashmiri people. Erdogan made his remarks after engaging in one-on-one and delegation talks with Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, as the leaders oversaw the signing of 24 agreements and a Memorandum of Understanding aimed at bolstering bilateral ties.

"The Kashmir issue should be addressed according to UN resolutions through dialogue, keeping in mind the aspirations of the people of Kashmir," Erdogan stated, reaffirming Turkey's solidarity with the Kashmiri cause. This sentiment follows a period of tensions between India and Turkey, particularly after India's revocation of the special status of Jammu and Kashmir in August 2019.

During the joint press conference, Erdogan expressed Turkey's commitment to further strengthening ties with Pakistan, highlighting collaborative efforts in various fields, including trade, agriculture, energy, and defence.

Prime Minister Sharif reciprocated the sentiments, expressing gratitude for Turkey's support during Pakistan's challenging times, notably during natural disasters.

Erdogan's visit was marked by a formal welcoming ceremony, including a guard of honour and a flypast by F-16 fighter jets. He was accompanied by First Lady Emine Erdogan and a delegation of investors. Subsequently, both leaders planted a sapling at the Prime Minister's House, symbolising their commitment to enhancing bilateral relations. *—PTI*

PM likely to push for tariff cut with Trump

NEW DELHI, 13 FEB

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is set to meet US President Donald Trump on Thursday, with a focus on avoiding punitive trade actions from Washington. Modi is likely to seek concessions on tariffs, new business deals, and cooperation on China to secure Trump's favour. It's understood that New Delhi may consider reducing tariffs in several sectors, provided there's reciprocal action from the US.

The two leaders are expected to discuss enhancing cooperation across key sectors, including trade, investment, energy, defence, technology, and immigration. While the meeting may not delve into specific tariff issues, broader trade and economic concerns will be central to the talks. The optics of the meeting, especially concerning sensitive topics like immigration and tariffs, will be closely watched, given the personal rapport between the leaders.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi upon his arrival in Washington DC. *PHOTO: PTI*

In light of Trump's tariffs on global steel and aluminium imports, India is preparing for potential impacts on its exports to the US. India, however, is adopting a more conciliatory approach compared to its previous stance during Trump's first term. The US-India bilateral trade reached $130 billion last year.

The two leaders are also likely to discuss the Indo-Pacific situation, Ukraine, and developments in West Asia. *—PTI*

'Will PM confront Trump on deportation row'

NEW DELHI, 13 FEB

Congress on Thursday asked Prime Minister Narendra Modi if he would "summon up the courage" to convey India's collective outrage at the "inhuman manner" in which Indian citizens were deported from that country.

Posing a series of questions Congress general secretary in-charge communications Jairam Ramesh also asked if Modi would convey to the US president that India would send its own aircraft -- like Venezuela and Colombia did -- to bring back Indian deportees in the future.

Ramesh also questioned if Modi would reiterate India's long-standing position on Palestine. *—PTI*

Atishi alleges power cuts after BJP's win

NEW DELHI, 13 FEB

Outgoing Delhi Chief Minister Atishi claimed on Thursday that the city has begun experiencing power cuts within just three days of the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) losing power. The senior AAP leader accused the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) of attempting to transform Delhi into Uttar Pradesh, a state infamous for prolonged power outages.

No immediate response from the BJP was available at the time of reporting. During a press conference, Atishi stated that over 40 power outages had been recorded across various areas of the capital since AAP's ousting on 5th February, prompting residents to start purchasing inverters.

She affirmed that the power sector was effectively monitored under AAP's governance, but has now reportedly deteriorated since the BJP regained power.

Atishi further alleged that the BJP lacks the skills necessary for effective governance and warned of potential long-lasting power outages in Delhi akin to those experienced in Uttar Pradesh.

The BJP emerged victorious in the recent elections, securing 48 out of 70 Assembly seats and marking its return to power in Delhi after a 26-year hiatus. However, the party has yet to form a new government. *—PTI*

Kerala Assembly stalled over SC/ ST budget cuts

T'PURAM, 13 FEB

Congress-led opposition, United Democratic Front (UDF), disrupted the proceedings of the Kerala Assembly on Thursday, claiming the Speaker interrupted Leader of Opposition VD Satheesan during a discussion on budget allocations for SC/ ST communities. The uproar prompted Speaker AN Shamseer to adjourn the Assembly after passing several bills.

During an adjournment motion, Satheesan alleged that the Left government had slashed funding for SC/ST communities, branding it "anti-Dalit" and "anti-tribal". The opposition's accusations were met with resistance from the LDF government, which denied any reductions in support for these communities. Finance Minister KN Balagopal argued that efforts to aid backward classes were ongoing.

Tensions escalated as opposition members protested in the well of the House, holding placards stating, "The rights of the opposition are not the Speaker's generosity." Amidst the chaos, the Assembly's audio was muted, and the broadcast continued with only the Speaker visible.

Despite the uproar, Speaker Shamseer proceeded with legislative business, utilising headsets for members to follow proceedings. The Assembly is scheduled to reconvene on 3 March. *—PTI*

KEEPING FRIENDS CLOSE

Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Aditya Thackeray meets AAP convenor Arvind Kejriwal, in New Delhi, on Thursday. The duo discussed alleged electoral irregularities and the state of democracy in the country *PHOTO: PTI*

AERO INDIA 2025

Aerospace firm, HAL to set up repair facility in UP

NEW DELHI, 13 FEB

Collins Aerospace has signed an agreement with Hindustan Aeronautics Limited to establish a maintenance, repair and overhaul (MRO) facility at HAL accessories complex in Lucknow, according to an official statement.

Once operational, the MRO facility will support all LCA (Light Combat Aircraft) Mk-1 operating in the Indian Air Force (IAF), it said. LCA is India's homegrown fighter jet being produced by the Bengaluru-based HAL. The facility will also provide repairs and overhaul services for Collins Aerospace's Integrated Drive Generators and the Generator Control Units that power some of the fighter jets. "The new MRO facility expands upon our long-standing partnership with Hindustan Aeronautics Limited. We are fully committed to in-country, long-term sustainment of India's warfighter fleet," Ryan Hudson, the vice president of Aftermarket, Power & Controls at Collins Aerospace, said.

People at Day 4 of Aero India at Airforce Station, Yelahanka in Bengaluru on Thursday *PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD*

With an Indian workforce of 7,000 employees, RTX has one of the largest presence amongst aerospace and defence firms in India, it said. *—PTI*

Lalu Prasad predicts NDA defeat in Bihar elections

PATNA, 13 FEB

PHOTO: ANI

RJD president Lalu Prasad has confidently asserted that the BJP-led NDA coalition will be defeated in the upcoming Bihar assembly elections, dismissing concerns over the saffron party's recent victory in Delhi. Prasad, a former chief minister and a prominent figure in Bihar politics, responded to journalists' inquiries, insisting, "There will be no impact here. The BJP will go."

Despite assertions from NDA leaders, including Deputy Chief Minister Vijay Kumar Sinha, who claimed the coalition's return to power is "certain," Prasad remained firm, stating that the electorate has recognised the BJP's shortcomings. JD(U) spokesman Neeraj Kumar challenged Prasad's stance, recalling the NDA's achievements during his tenure and suggesting his political relevance is waning. The NDA has set an ambitious target of 225 seats, aiming for a significant electoral win, while the RJD prepares for a challenging campaign. *—PTI*

PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA

ED sleuths freeze ₹170 cr in forex fraud probe

NEW DELHI, 13 FEB

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has frozen bank deposits totalling Rs 170 crore linked to an alleged fraudulent forex trading scheme following recent searches. Raids were conducted on 11 February in Delhi, Noida, Shamli, and Rohtak as part of an investigation into QFX Trade Ltd. and its directors, including Rajendra Sood and Nawab Ali, alias Lavish Chaudhary. The agency claims the company operated an unregulated deposit scheme promising high returns and shifted its name to YFX after police FIRs. Investigations revealed multiple "shell" companies involved in the collection of investor funds. *—PTI*

Pant's life saviour attempts suicide with girlfriend

MUZAFFARNAGAR, 13 FEB

Rajat Kumar, 25, who helped save cricketer Rishab Pant's life following the near fatal car accident, attempted suicide by consuming poison with his girlfriend in Uttar Pradesh. Kumar is currently hospitalised, while 21-year-old Manu Kashyap died while under treatment. The two are believed to have taken the drastic step after their families opposed their marriage over caste differences. Police said the couple consumed poison on 9 February after they learnt that Kashyap's family had fixed her marriage with someone else. Kashyap died on 12 February. Police have launched an investigation into the matter although neither of the families issued a formal complaint. In 2022, Rajat Kumar and his friend Nishu Kumar rescued Rishabh Pant when the cricketer's Mercedes crashed into a divider and caught fire. *—Agencies*

Kerala couple arrested for attacking police

KOCHI, 13 FEB

A 23-year-old woman and her 27-year-old male companion were arrested early Thursday for allegedly obstructing police officers in their duties and causing damage to a police vehicle. The incident occurred around 12.30am near Palarivattom, following complaints that the pair was intimidating passersby with a knife. Upon arrival, police attempted to arrest the man, but the woman and her friend intervened. In a confrontation, the woman reportedly smashed a window of the police jeep with her mobile phone, causing estimated damages of Rs 15,000. An FIR has been filed against both persons invoking several sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita and the Prevention of Damage to Public Property Act. *—PTI*

Students arrive in luxury cars for farewell; booked

SURAT, 13 FEB

Police have filed complaints against the parents of Class 12 students after they arrived at a school farewell event in a convoy of 35 luxury vehicles, showcasing reckless behaviour en route. The incident, which took place on 7 February, came to light after a video surfaced online, showing underage students driving high-end cars including BMW, Maserati and Porsche while engaging in dangerous stunts. The footage showed some students holding smoke guns and others perilously perched on car doors or standing out of sunroofs. The students belonged to Fountainhead School in the Olpad area. Police seized 22 cars and registered six FIRs. Deputy Commissioner of Police RP Barot stated that of the identified vehicles, three were driven by students lacking driving licences. *—PTI*

SC pulls up ED for misusing PMLA to keep accused in jail

Court asks if the provision was being misused like the dowry law

NEW DELHI, 13 FEB

The Supreme Court has rebuked the Enforcement Directorate (ED) for its use of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) to detain an accused individual, raising concerns about potential misuse, likening it to the well-known dowry law litigation. The remarks came during a bail hearing for Arun Pati Tripathi, a former excise officer from Chhattisgarh.

Justices Abhay S Oka and Ujjal Bhuyan expressed astonishment at Tripathi's continued detention, despite the Chhattisgarh High Court quashing the order that had taken cognisance of the complaint against him. "The concept of PMLA cannot be that a person should remain in jail. If the tendency is to keep the person in jail, even after cognisance is quashed, what can be said? See what happened in 498A cases; PMLA is also being misused like that?" the bench questioned.

During the proceedings, Additional Solicitor General SV Raju, representing the ED, objected to the bail application, arguing that criminals should not evade justice on technicalities. He contended that the quashing of cognisance was irrelevant to the bail decision. However, the bench expressed alarm, stating, "It is shocking that the ED knows the cognisance was quashed, yet this was suppressed. We should summon the officers. The ED must come clean."

The Supreme Court was hearing Tripathi's appeal against a Chhattisgarh High Court ruling that had denied him bail in connection with the high-profile liquor scam. Tripathi, who has held prominent roles within the Chhattisgarh State Marketing Corporation Limited, was arrested following an ED investigation linked to a broader probe into alleged collusion among government officials and private entities aimed at manipulating excise policies for illicit profit. *—PTI*

Justices Abhay S Oka and Ujjal Bhuyan said the concept of PMLA cannot be that a person should remain in jail **PHOTO: PTI**

HC grants bail to Wadhwans, slams long incarceration

MUMBAI, 13 FEB

The Bombay High Court has granted bail to DHFL promoters Dheeraj and Kapil Wadhwan in connection with the 2020 Yes Bank money laundering case, due to their lengthy incarceration and the uncertainty regarding the trial's commencement.

A single bench, led by Justice Milind Jadhav, issued the ruling on Wednesday, setting bail at Rs 1 lakh each for the brothers.

The court highlighted that the Wadhwans have been in custody for nearly four years and nine months, surpassing half the maximum punishment they could face, which is seven years.

Justice Jadhav noted that the prolonged detention infringes on their fundamental right to a speedy trial, as enshrined in Article 21 of the Constitution. *—PTI*

Azam Khan, son get bail in machine theft case

NEW DELHI, 13 FEB

The Supreme Court has granted bail to former Uttar Pradesh minister Azam Khan and his son Abdullah Azam Khan, following an appeal against an Allahabad High Court decision that denied them bail in a machine theft case.

The bench, comprising Justices MM Sundresh and Rajesh Bindal, issued its ruling on 10 February, overturning the High Court's 21 September order.

Noting the duration of the incarceration of the appellants and the filing of the chargesheet, the court said, "We are inclined to set aside the impugned order and grant bail." It imposed conditions to ensure cooperation with the trial and prevent attempts to influence the witnesses.

Khan, his son and five others are accused of stealing a road-cleaning machine owned by the Nagar Palika Parishad in Rampur district.

The complaint was filed by Wakar Ali Khan following a change in the state government, asserting that the theft occurred in 2014. *—PTI*

Delhi–Centre peace may not help air quality: SC

NEW DELHI, 13 FEB

The tussle between the Centre and the Delhi government might have ended with the change of guard, but that does not mean they would be proactive in resolving the air pollution crisis, the Supreme Court said on Thursday.

A bench of Justices Abhay S Oka and Ujjal Bhuyan said this while hearing the MC Mehta case. Senior advocate Aparajita Singh, who is acting as amicus curiae, had submitted she was relieved that Delhi and the Centre would not be at loggerheads after the BJP was set to from government.

She said half of the time was wasted in fighting and the issues remain unresolved.

The bench then said in a lighter vein, "That's the practical aspect of it. They may not be fighting... that does not mean they will be proactive."

Additional solicitor general Aishwarya Bhati also said she was optimistic that there would no confrontation. *—PTI*

JAMIA PROTESTS

Police detain 10 students for violence, up security

NEW DELHI, 13 FEB

Delhi Police on Thursday detained More than 10 students at Jamia Millia Islamia University following a protest against the university's disciplinary actions against two PhD scholars for allegedly organising a demonstration last year.

The students organised the protest condemning what they described as a "crackdown on student activism".

The university accused the protesters of vandalising property, including the central canteen and security advisor's office, prompting police intervention.

According to police sources, the university requested assistance to remove students from the protest site around 4am on Thursday.

Subsequently, heavy police presence was established outside the campus to maintain order.

Security personnel stand guard as students enter the Jamia Millia Islamia University in New Delhi on Thursday **PHOTO: PTI**

Protesters have gathered outside Kalkaji police station, claiming that approximately 20 students are missing following the police action, and they have yet to receive information regarding their whereabouts.

The discontent among students escalated after some received suspension letters from the administration, citing vandalism and unlawful protests that disrupted university functions and inconvenienced others. *—PTI*

Mumbai cyber cell, cops summon Samay Raina

MUMBAI, 13 FEB

The Maharashtra Cyber Department and Mumbai Police have requested comedian Samay Raina to appear before them within the next five days concerning contentious remarks made by fellow influencer Ranveer Allahbadia during a web show. Raina is currently in the United States and has sought additional time to respond to the summons.

Both the cyber cell and Mumbai police are conducting separate investigations related to Allahbadia's comments during Raina's YouTube series, "India's Got Latent". While officials have asked Raina to record his statement by 17 February, the cyber cell has scheduled him to appear on 18 February.

An Assam Police team, in Mumbai as part of its investigation against Allahbadia and others, met with the Maharashtra cyber cell on Thursday. Previously, the team also visited the Khar police station and consulted senior officers.

The Guwahati Police filed a case against Allahbadia and four others on Monday in light of the controversy. The Mumbai Police have already taken statements from seven individuals, including social media influencer Apoorva Makhija.

> You want me (to) keep my mouth closed. I think in the past week we have seen what all happens when mouth opens.
>
> -AR Rahman, Music composer

The Maharashtra Cyber Department summoned over 40 people, including Raina and Allahbadia, as part of its probe following Allahbadia's remarks, which sparked widespread debate on freedom of speech and decency. *—PTI*

Wild animal attacks: UDF holds protest in Wayanad

WAYANAD, 13 FEB

The Congress-led United Democratic Front (UDF) has initiated a dawn-to-dusk hartal in Wayanad district following recent fatalities linked to wild animal attacks. Activists blocked roads, prompting police arrests in various locations across the district.

Ths protest arose after a member of the local tribal community was killed by a wild elephant at a tea estate in Attamala. This followed another elephant attack claimed the life of a 45-year-old man in Noolpuzha village. UDF leaders have accused the state government of failing to implement adequate protective measures against such wildlife threats.

Leader of the Opposition VD Satheesan highlighted that in just a week, five individuals have died due to elephant tramplings in the high range areas. He urged Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan to take immediate action to safeguard residents from these perilous encounters.

Meanwhile, Kerala Forest Minister AK Saseendran labelled the resignation demands from two bishops of the Syro Malabar Church as politically motivated. *—PTI*

Centre grants Z-category security cover to Dalai Lama

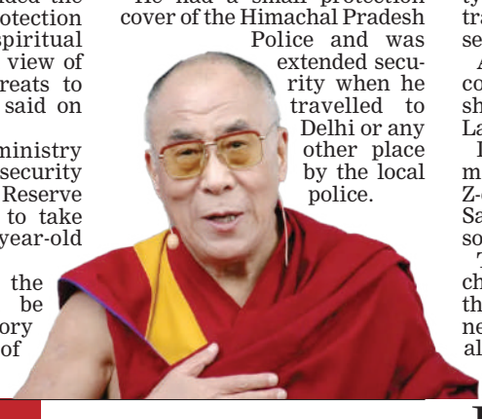
NEW DELHI, 13 FEB

The Centre has provided the Z-category armed protection cover to Tibetan spiritual leader Dalai Lama in view of potential security threats to him, official sources said on Thursday.

The Union home ministry has directed the VIP security wing of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) to take charge of the 89-year-old spiritual leader.

The sources said the Dalai Lama would be secured by a Z-category protection cover of CRPF commandos in all parts of the country.

He had a small protection cover of the Himachal Pradesh Police and was extended security when he travelled to Delhi or any other place by the local police.



The government has now granted him a uniform security cover after a review by central intelligence agencies, a senior officer said.

A team of about 30 CRPF commandos will work in shifts to secure the Dalai Lama, he said.

In a similar move, the home ministry has provided a Z-category cover to BJP leader Sambit Patra in Manipur, the sources said.

The 50-year-old Puri MP is in charge of the party's affairs in the state, which has been witnessing ethnic violence for almost two years. *—PTI*

Cal HC revives 10 Nandigram murder cases

KOLKATA, 13 FEB

The Calcutta High Court has ruled that individuals accused in 10 murder cases related to the 2007 anti-land acquisition protests in Nandigram and Khejuri must stand trial, reversing the West Bengal government's prior decision to withdraw the prosecution.

Justice Debangsu Basak held the government action, taken under Section 321 of the CrPC in 2020, as legally invalid. The judges noted such withdrawals would potentially condone political violence instead of discouraging it. *—PTI*

UNINVITED GUEST

Leopard gatecrashes wedding in UP; captured

LUCKNOW, 13 FEB

A wedding celebration in Lucknow took an unexpected turn when an uninvited guest – a leopard – wandered into the venue, resulting in injuries to a forest official, panic among attendees, and the bride and groom trapped in their car for hours.

The incident unfolded on Wednesday night in the Buddheshwar Road area, as the leopard entered a banquet hall, prompting guests to flee in terror. Eyewitness accounts revealed that the bride and groom quickly sought refuge inside their vehicle during the chaos.

Authorities, including police and forest department officials, arrived at the scene promptly. The leopard was tranquillised after several hours of concerted effort, around 2am. Forest department official Mukaddar Ali sustained injuries to his hand while attempting to capture the animal.

A forest department team captures the leopard that entered a wedding venue in Lucknow **PHOTO: PTI**

In the midst of the turmoil, footage surfaced of a forest official struggling to subdue the leopard, which appeared to snatch his weapon during the confrontation.

Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav has condemned the incident, attributing it to "corruption" within the BJP-led state government, which he claims has exacerbated human encroachment into forest areas. In a post on X, he expressed concern over the increasing presence of wild animals in urban areas, putting citizens at risk.

Yadav questioned whether the government would take appropriate action or dismiss the incident, suggesting they might downplay the situation by referring to the leopard as an "oversized cat." *—PTI*

Love life study puts Indians among 'least satisfied' lot

NEW DELHI, 13 FEB

A new global survey, conducted across 30 countries and released ahead of Valentine's Day, reveals that Indians are among the least satisfied with their love lives.

The 'Love Life Satisfaction 2025' survey results were led by countries such as Colombia (82 per cent), Thailand (81 per cent), Mexico (81 per cent), Indonesia (81 per cent), and Malaysia (79 per cent). India at 63 per cent, South Korea at 59 per cent, and Japan at 56 per cent were at the bottom.

It was conducted by leading market research and polling company Ipsos with a sample size of 23,765 adults across 30 countries and more than 2,000 in India.

"Indians largely live in joint families and those in nuclear families have familial responsibilities, work pressures, career and societal pressures, leaving less time for romance, physical intimacy and love," Ashwini Sirsikar, group service line leader, Ipsos UU & Synthesio, Indi, said in a statement.

The survey also looked at different parameters separately to assess how Indians stacked up. While 64 per cent of Indians polled said they feel loved, only 57 per cent of Indians claimed to be satisfied with their romantic/ sex life.

However, as per the findings, more Indians (67 per cent) were satisfied with the relationship shared with their spouse.

"Interestingly, happiness with sex life and partner was seen to be co-related. People in countries that are more satisfied with their relationship with their partner are more likely to be satisfied with their romantic/ sex life. *—PTI*

WHEN THE RIVER IS DRY

King Okpabi, who presides over Niger delta ethnic group Ogoni holds a bottle of polluted water as he stands with climate activists outside the Royal Courts of Justice, ahead of the Ogale and Bille communities versus Shell court case in London. The case is centred around the pollution cause by oil company Shell in Nigeria. A UN report in 2011 said that water found three metres underground smelled of oil and was contaminated with chemicals ***PHOTO: PTI***

Bangladesh leaders led brutal repression, says UN

The repression of protests left at least 1,400 people dead, according to the latest UN investigation. Bangladesh Police also reported that 44 officers were killed ***PHOTO: PTI***

UN human rights chief Volker Türk visiting the Nitol Hospital in Bangladesh, where students received treatment after being shot while participating in last summer's anti-government protests.

The repression of mass protests in Bangladesh last year that toppled longtime prime minister Sheikh Hasina left as many as 1,400 people dead in just 46 days – the vast majority shot by security forces, UN human rights chief Volker Türk said on Wednesday.

In addition to those killed by the former government's security and intelligence services alongside Awami League party associates, a report by the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) into the alleged crimes indicated that thousands were injured, including one youngster who was shot in the hand at point-blank range for throwing stones.

"There are reasonable grounds to believe that officials of the former government, its security and intelligence apparatus, together with violent elements associated with the former ruling party, committed serious and systematic human rights violations," the High Commissioner for Human Rights said.

Speaking in Geneva, Mr. Türk highlighted that some of the gravest violations detailed in the report may constitute international crimes that could be heard by the International Criminal Court (ICC), as Bangladesh is a State party to the Rome Statute which created the tribunal in The Hague. The ICC's foundational Statute gives it jurisdiction over genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and the crime of aggression (following an amendment in 2010).

Alleged crimes in Bangladesh against the student-led protest included "hundreds of extrajudicial killings, extensive arbitrary arrest and detention and torture, and ill treatment, including of children, as well as gender based violence," the UN rights chief said.

Iron grip on power

Furthermore, these violations "were carried out with the knowledge, coordination and direction of the former political leadership and senior security officials, with a specific goal of suppressing the protests and keep the former government's grip on power".

According to the OHCHR report, as many as 12 to 13 per cent of those killed were children. Bangladesh Police also reported that 44 of its officers were killed between 1 July and 15 August 2024.

Last summer's protests that led Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to step down after 15 years in power were triggered by the High Court's decision to reinstate a deeply unpopular quota system in public service jobs. But broader grievances were already entrenched, arising from "destructive and corrupt politics and governance" that spurred inequality, the UN human rights office report maintained.

"I went to one of the hospitals in Bangladesh when I visited, and I could talk to some of the survivors and some of them will be disabled for their lives. Especially young people...some of them were children," Mr. Türk told journalists in Geneva, recounting his visit to Dhaka in September.

State killings

"The brutal response was a calculated and well-coordinated strategy by the former Government to hold onto power in the face of mass opposition," insisted UN Human Rights Chief Volker Turk.

"The testimonies and evidence we gathered paint a disturbing picture of rampant State violence and targeted killings, that are amongst the most serious violations of human rights, and which may also constitute international crimes. Accountability and justice are essential for national healing and for the future of Bangladesh," he added.

The UN human rights office probe mission started work in Bangladesh on 16 September 2024 with a team that included a forensic physician, a weapons expert, a gender expert and an open-source analyst. The investigators visited protest hotspots including universities and hospitals. Their work was complemented by more than 900 witness testimonies. — *United Nations*

LETTERS write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

SALAR

Reviving the radio era in the modern world

Shankar Iyer

Nostalgiaana's live show exploring the work of noted music director Salil Chowdhury ***PHOTO: NOSTALGIAANA***

On a train journey from Delhi to Mumbai last week, I chanced upon two co-passengers discussing music. As I listened more carefully, I realised that the topic of their discussion was India's nightingale Lata Mangeshkar whose third death anniversary was just around the corner. As the focus of their discussion moved to her intense, yet riveting solo renditions heard many years back on the Radio, the conversation became more animated. I watched in silence for a while as they spoke of Lata's lesser mentioned but compelling melodies *Aye dil zubaan na sirf khol de* and *Samjhe na baat meri*, I could not help but introduce myself to my co-passengers. It goes without saying that the next few hours of our train journey was sheer bliss with the three of us reminiscing the golden age of Radio where such beautiful melodies were brought into our living rooms. By the time the train reached Mumbai, I had also made firm friends with two strangers.

As a founding member of *Nostalgiaana* (nostalgia and *gaana*) a forum dedicated to reviving and reliving the magic of Radio, this has been my consistent experience. Any mention of film music and most people begin remembering the days when radio occupied the pride of place in homes, and when family members would gather around the radio to listen to their favourite singers, lyricists and music directors spin magical moments.

A casual conversation with friends on the radio takes many of us back in time – generally between the 1950s and 1990s (when television had not yet become such an all-pervading influence in our lives). I distinctly remember my friends spending time trying to fine-tune short-wave signals on a small radio set – just so that they could get a *'fluctuating audio glimpse'* of their favourite film song.

In those days, with radio being an integral part of everyday life, family members, groups of friends could seldom resist tuning in to their favourite Radio shows like *Binaca Geetmala, Chhayageet & Bela Ke Phool* -- some of them being aired on late night slots.

Over a period of time these songs began connecting music lovers. While the songs mostly did the talking on their own, the Radio acted as important glue. Who can forget the songs that we associate with our childhood, with small victories in the playground, with falling in love, the realities that plague our everyday life, and the desire for contentment.

With the growth of Television, YouTube, OTT and various media offerings over the years, Radio seems to have taken a good backseat in the last 20-30 years.

Predictable playlist offerings have also contributed to the missing thrill, long-lost fun. The surprising "wow" factor on hearing a song from different time-periods in a single programme, which kept the listeners guessing added to the magic of the Radio. While no one could predict what was going to be played next, listeners kept hoping for songs from their favourite films, favourite playback singers, favourite lyricists or music directors.

The idea of sending *farmaishes* to an unknown anchor in an unknown city with the hope that 'your song' would be played on the next show was delightful experience. By playing songs from different genres, moods, artists etc, the Radio subtly contributed to the possibility of a broader and nuanced appreciation of Hindi Film Music in the minds of the listeners.

While today we have so many avenues to pick and choose our favourite songs, this special experience of the radio has been missing in our lives. It is in order to bridge this gap that a group of my friends came together to bring back the 'radio listening experience' and set up *Nostalgiaana* – a forum dedicated to exploring Hindi Film Music as an art form.

Nostalgiaana began in 2017, when I along with my school friend Balaji Ramachandran decided to share our understanding of Hindi Film songs with music lovers across the globe. We decided put together all the learning and music-related assimilation we had gathered over the years through hundreds of jamming sessions and discussions, meetings with Film Music personalities and reach it to millions of equally passionate music lovers.

Nostalgiaana, which began its online version in June 2020 in an attempt to destress people during the hard months of Covid lockdown, is now a buzzing, growing community of music lovers.

For the last five years *Nostalgiaana*'s online community shows, have been instrumental in bringing *'The Radio'* back into our living rooms through our phones and laptops.

With six shows a week, *Nostalgiaana's* 'guided listening shows' imitate and enhance the *Radio Experience* complete with its thematic programmes, a surprise bouquet of songs which keep the listener guessing, and its increasingly popular programme *Zoomritaliyya* – a collection of songs requested by the listeners celebrating the days of people sending *farmaishes* on postcards from *Jhoomritaliyya*.

The online community of *Nostalgiaana* comes together on zoom every night to listen to music just like people did in the past – and celebrate and relive the *Radio Experience*.

Nostalgiaana organises both free and paid shows. Members can also gift shows to their friends and family.

Radio enthusiasts can reach *Nostalgiaana* via their website www.nostalgiaana.com.

Shankar Iyer is a retired banker who took voluntary retirement to set up Nostalgiaana, which aims at bringing back the magic of listening to film songs on the Radio

Chocolate has its price on Valentine's Day as cocoa cost surges

St Valentine chocolates always seek to show how deep your love is. This year, it might just also show how deep your pockets are.

With the price of cocoa beans setting unprecedented records on the commodities market, it will certainly turn the gift of love into a bigger financial commitment than it once was. Turns out that if love is reputed to be eternal, a low price for cocoa, the essential ingredient in chocolate, is not.

No beans, no Valentine's chocolate

"The price increase of cocoa is absolutely spectacular, now for two, two and a half years," said Philippe de Sellier, the head of both Leonidas and Belgian chocolate federation Choprabisco.

When it stood at less than $2,000 a ton in the summer of 2022, it really took over early last year and peaked at well over $12,000 during the Christmas season and has been hovering around the $10,000 mark since.

"We are seeing unprecedented prices. They haven't been this high for the last 50 years," said Bart Van Besien, policy adviser of the Oxfam fair trade group. And the impact can be felt deep in chocolate gourmet country Belgium, where some of its 280 chocolate companies are left with a bleeding heart during Valentine's week.

Dominque Persoone, owner of the famed Chocolate Line brand, still has plenty of beans to grind in his workshop in Bruges, but considers himself lucky, partly because he also has his own cocoa plantation in Mexico.

"I have a lot of colleagues who are really in trouble, because the price is too high," he said. "If you don't have good contacts, they just don't deliver anymore."

Some just close for Valentine, he said, turning one of the few financial bonanzas of the year into a forced vacation, hoping that Easter, with its eggs and bunnies, will bring better tidings. Many chocolatiers can't go for the usual profit margins and turn all the extra costs of the cocoa prices over to their customers. Persoone said that his chocolates increased in price by 20 per cent over the last year alone while de Selliers said that it depends very much from producer to producer.

The perfect chocolate storm

The shock of cocoa prices pretty much is a metaphorical perfect storm, mixing climate, disease, commodity speculation, the plight of farmers and social ascendency around the world into one heady mix.

Cocoa prices are at a 50-year high. A key reason is climate change, which has significantly impacted the Ivory Coast and Ghana, where 60 per cent of the world's cocoa is produced ***PHOTO: X***

"The drop that has happened now in production was directly linked to climate change," said Van Besien, blaming changes in annual rain and drought patterns in western Africa that weakened the sensitive trees in key production areas. Persoone also said that the temperature differences between night and day increased in the small strip of land around the equator where the trees can thrive. Compounded by disease, it made sure too many harvests failed.

At the same time across the world, populations lifted themselves out of poverty, middle classes expanded in places like China and the craving for the delicacy increased.

And making matters worse, the years of slumping prices for the beans simply drove farmers off the land to look for a better future in the cities and pushed production further down. De Selliers said that "60 per cent of cocoa comes from Ivory Coast and Ghana and these farmers have to make a better living. It is extremely important."

- Many chocolatiers can't go for the usual profit margins and turn all the extra costs of the cocoa prices over to their customers.

The shock of cocoa prices is a metaphorical perfect storm, mixing climate, disease, commodity speculation, the plight of farmers and social ascendency around the world into one heady mix

Persoone concurred: "We didn't pay enough to have an honest price for the farmers."

So, strangely enough, low prices then, help cause high prices now.

"The big irony in the cocoa industry is that farmers are now getting a fair price at the moment they are abandoning cocoa farming," Van Besien said. "With the price they are getting right now, they could have invested in sustainable practices. They could have sent their children to school."

Chocolate love within reach

Does it mean a premier box of chocolates is a guilty pleasure on Valentine's Day?

"Yeah, the guilt question. It's one that always works," said Van Besien, the fair trade expert. "We could not survive if we would be thinking about these things all the time," arguing that legislation should trump consumer emotions.

"We should have laws that make buying cocoa below the cost of the production something illegal. And it should not be up to the consumer to make this decision," he said. Both de Selliers and Persoone hope that if the prices drop down again, they stay around the $5,000 or $6,000 mark.

"I really, really hope the money goes to the farmers," Persoone said.

So in the meantime, despite the price hikes, the chocolate shouldn't leave too bitter a taste.

"It's a small luxury that most people still can afford," Persoone said. "I hope it stays like this." —*PTI*

PHOTO: X

Turkish Prez, Pak PM discuss Gaza, bilateral issues

ISLAMABAD, 13 FEB

Turkiye's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan met with Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday at his office in Islamabad to discuss the situation in Gaza and a range of bilateral issues. They will sign several agreements for boosting trade and economic ties between the nations, officials said. Erdogan was welcomed by people in traditional Turkish and Pakistani dresses dancing to the beat of drums as the leader's convoy passed through the streets. Erdogan and his wife, Emine Erdogan, were welcomed by Sharif on their arrival at his office. A band played the national anthems of both countries before the leaders inspected a guard of honour. Erdogan will jointly chair bilateral strategic cooperation talks, according to a government announcement. —*PTI*

NATO for Ukraine, Europe in peace talks

Demand follows Trump's signal that he would meet with Vladimir Putin soon

BRUSSELS, 13 FEB

Several NATO allies stressed on Thursday that Ukraine and Europe must not be cut out of any peace negotiations, after US President Donald Trump signalled that he would hold talks soon with Russian President Vladimir Putin.

"Let's not forget, Russia remains a threat well beyond Ukraine," UK Defence Secretary John Healey after the United States rattled NATO by saying that Ukraine should never join the alliance and that European allies should take responsibility for Ukraine's security going forward.

"There can be no negotiation about Ukraine without Ukraine. And Ukraine's voice must be at the heart of any talks," Healey told reporters at NATO headquarters, as the organisation's 32 defence ministers met for talks on Ukraine.

Swedish Defence Minister Pal Jonson said European nations provided about 60 per cent of the military support to Ukraine last year and must be involved, especially given US demands that Europe take more responsibility for Ukraine's security in the longer term. "It's very natural that we're engaged into the discussions," Jonson said.

US Secretary of Defence Pete Hegseth with NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte and NATO's Supreme Allied Commander Europe General Christopher Cavoli in Brussels PHOTO: X

Jonson's Estonian counterpart, Hanno Pevkur, underlined that the European Union has driven sanctions against Russia, has invested heavily in Ukraine's defence, and will be asked to foot the bill for rebuilding the war-ravaged country.

"We have to be there. So there is no question about it. Otherwise this peace will not be long-lasting," Pevkur warned.

US Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth told Ukraine's Western backers on Wednesday that NATO membership for Ukraine was unrealistic. He suggested Kyiv should abandon hopes of winning all its territory back from Russia and instead prepare for a negotiated peace settlement to be backed up by international troops.

After talks with Putin and then Zelenskyy, Trump said on Wednesday he would "probably" meet in person with the Russian leader soon, and suggested that the meeting could happen in Saudi Arabia. —*PTI*

NATO holds drill sans US

NATO is testing its ability to rapidly deploy across eastern Europe without direct US assistance as Washington shifts its approach toward European defence and the war in Ukraine. The six-week Steadfast Dart 2025 exercises across Bulgaria, Romania and Greece are taking place as Russia's invasion of Ukraine approaches the three-year mark. They involve some 10,000 troops from nine nations. —*PTI*

PHOTO: X

Gas explosion at Taiwan food court kills 4, injures 26

TAIPEI, 13 FEB

A gas explosion at a department store in Taiwan on Thursday killed four people and injured 26, fire authorities said. The blast occurred at the food court on the 12th floor of the Shin Kong Mitsukoshi department store in Taichung city, the Fire Bureau said. Among the dead were two tourists from Macau, the tourism office said. Local media reported that they were part of a family of seven who were there for tourism. The other five were also injured and are being treated at a local hospital. Dozens of firefighters were deployed to the scene. Parts of the building's exterior were damaged and scattered fragments were strewn on the streets. —*PTI*

China accused of endangering Australian plane

MELBOURNE, 13 FEB

Australia on Thursday accused a Chinese fighter of releasing flares that endangered its military surveillance over the South China Sea, describing it as an unsafe and unprofessional interaction. The J-16 fighter released flares on Tuesday within 30 meters of an Australian P-8 Poseidon surveillance jet in daylight and in international air space, Defense Minister Richard Marles said. "The J-16 was so close that there was no way you could have been able to ensure that the flares did not hit the P-8," Marles told Sky News. "Had any of those flares hit the P-8, that would have definitely had the potential for significant damage to that aircraft," he said. —*PTI*

US Coast Guard releases last voices from ill-fated Titan

NEW YORK, 13 FEB

The US Coast Guard has released a chilling audio recording believed to capture the Titan submersible's final moments before its implosion in the Atlantic Ocean on 18 June, 2023. Operated by OceanGate, the Titan was on a Titanic wreck expedition when the disaster occurred, killing all five aboard: OceanGate CEO Stockton Rush, British billionaire Hamish Harding, explorer Paul-Henri Nargeolet and Pakistani businessman Shahzada Dawood with his son, Suleman. The recording, detected by a NOAA acoustic device 900 miles from the site, features the sub's unique sounds followed by a loud bang. The tragedy prompted a massive search effort but ended in heartbreak. —*Agencies*

TRUMP CALLS EDU DEPT 'BIG CON JOB', WANTS TO SHUT IT

WASHINGTON DC, 13 FEB

In a bold move that adds to a series of sweeping actions, US President Donald Trump announced on Wednesday his intention to immediately close the federal Department of Education. While reaffirming his commitment to this controversial goal, Trump acknowledged the challenges involved in dismantling the agency.

The Department of Education, which plays a central role in administering educational support programs, employs over 4,200 staff members and operated on a budget of $251 billion in the most recent fiscal year, according to a Reuters report. Despite its vast scope, Trump has frequently criticized the agency, describing it as inefficient and unnecessary.

During his campaign and early presidency, Trump floated the idea of shutting down the department via executive order.

However, he admitted that the process would require cooperation from Congress and input from teachers' unions, making the path to closure far from straightforward.

"The Department of Education is a big con job," Trump told reporters, reiterating his long-standing disdain for the agency. He also confirmed that Linda McMahon, his nominee for education secretary, would be responsible for overseeing the department's closure efforts.

This announcement reflects Trump's push to enact sweeping changes in the early days of his presidency, including requiring federal employees to return to office settings or face termination.

While the proposed actions have sparked debate, Trump remains steadfast in his vision of reshaping the federal government. —*Agencies*

Musk urges US govt to 'delete entire agencies'

DUBAI, 13 FEB

Elon Musk on Thursday called to "delete entire agencies" from the United States' federal government as part of his push under President Donald Trump to radically cut spending and restructure its priorities.

Musk offered a wide-ranging survey via a videocall to the World Governments Summit in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, of what he described as the priorities of the Trump administration interspersed with multiple references to "thermonuclear warfare" and the possible dangers of artificial intelligence.

"We really have here rule of the bureaucracy as opposed to rule of the people – democracy," Musk said. "I think we do need to delete entire agencies as opposed to leave a lot of them behind. If we don't remove the roots of the weed, then it's easy for the weed to grow back." —*PTI*

Vance to visit Dachau concentration camp

US Vice President JD Vance will visit the Dachau concentration camp memorial on Thursday, making a stop at one of the most powerful symbols of World War II, before his critical talks with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy about the three-year Russia-Ukraine conflict. Vance and Secretary of State Marco Rubio will meet Zelenskyy on Friday on the sidelines of the Munich Security Conference to discuss President Trump's intensifying push for Ukraine and Russia to end the war. —*PTI*

X to pay Trump $10M for banning him

Elon Musk has settled the lawsuit by President Trump against X after the infamous ban he faced on major social media platforms following the 6 January Capitol riot. It was revealed that Musk agreed to pay around USD 10M to Trump to close out this four-year-old grudge of Trump against X for getting rid of him from the platform. After the riot in 2021, Trump has been at the centre of controversy for calling upon his supporters to gather arms and protest in Washington, leading to ban. —*Agencies*

75,000 US federal workers take Trump's buyout offer

Around 75,000 US federal workers have accepted the Trump administration's "deferred resignation" offer. The attrition rate for the federal workforce was 5.9 per cent in fiscal year 2023. Earlier in the day, US District Judge George A. O'Toole Jr allowed the resignation offer to proceed, overturning his previous order that had temporarily halted it. He said in his ruling that the unions that sued to stop the offer did not have the necessary legal standing to bring the case. —*Agencies*

US judge approves Trump's bid to reduce federal staff

A federal judge on Wednesday cleared the way for President Trump's plan to downsize the federal workforce with a deferred resignation programme. US District Judge George O'Toole Jr in Boston found a group of labour unions didn't have legal standing to challenge the programme, commonly described as a buyout. Trump wants to use financial incentives to encourage government employees to quit. According to the White House, tens of thousands of workers have taken the government up on its offer. —*Agencies*

Paul Kapur is Trump's pick for South and Central Asia

S Paul Kapur, an expert on India-Pakistan security and nuclear issues, is likely to be the Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asia, the top job for the region in America's diplomatic arm. For now, Eric Meyer, who last served as the US Chargé d'Affaires in Oslo, is the senior bureau official for the region. rom 2020 to 2021, he served on the State Department's Policy Planning Staff, contributing to discussions on South and Central Asia, Indo-Pacific security, and US-India relations. —*PTI*

Hamas relents on hostage release

CAIRO, 13 FEB

Hamas said on Thursday that it would release the next group of Israeli hostages as planned, apparently resolving a major dispute that threatened the ceasefire in the Gaza Strip. It said Egyptian and Qatari mediators have affirmed that they will work to "remove all hurdles," and that it would implement the ceasefire deal.

The statement indicated three more Israeli hostages would be freed on Saturday. There was no immediate comment from Israel after Hamas' announcement.

Hamas' move would allow the ceasefire in the Gaza Strip to continue for now, but its future remains in doubt.

Hamas had threatened to delay the next release of Israeli hostages, accusing Israel of failing to meet its obligations. Israel, with the support of US President Donald Trump, had threatened to renew its offensive if hostages were not freed.

Egypt and Qatar have served as key mediators with Hamas and helped broker the ceasefire PHOTO: X

Hamas said it held talks in Cairo with Egyptian officials and was in contact with Qatar's prime minister about increasing the entry of shelters, medical supplies, fuel and heavy equipment for clearing rubble. —*PTI*

Munich driver rams vehicle into crowd, 28 injured

BERLIN, 13 FEB

A driver mowed a group of people with is vehicle in Munich on Thursday, injuring at least 28, authorities said.

The authorities didn't provide details about the incident near downtown Munich which took place around 10.30am, including whether the people were hit deliberately.

Police said the driver was "secured" at the scene and no longer poses any danger. A damaged Mini could be seen at the scene. A demonstration by the service workers' union ver.di was taking place at the time of the incident. —*PTI*

WAR-SEPARATED FAMILIES

N Korea destroys reunion centre

PYONGYANG, 13 FEB

North Korea is destroying a facility at its Mount Kumgang resort used for gatherings between families separated after the Korean War, authorities in South Korea said on Thursday.

Amid the latest sign of tensions between the two Koreas, a spokesperson for Seoul's unification ministry said, "The demolition of the Mount Kumgang Reunion Center is an inhumane act that tramples on the earnest wishes of separated families."

South Korea "sternly urges an immediate halt to such actions" and expresses strong regret, the official said, adding, "North Korea's unilateral demolition cannot be justified under any pretext, and the North Korean authorities must bear full responsibility for this situation."

More than 133,600 South Koreans have registered themselves as "separated families" since 1988. This indicates that they have relatives in the North. —*DW News*

Diddy sues NBC over new documentary

NEW YORK, 13 FEB

As he awaits trial on sex trafficking charges, Sean 'Diddy' Combs is suing NBC Universal over a documentary that he says falsely accuses him of being a serial murderer who had sex with underage girls.

The lawsuit filed on Wednesday in New York state court says the documentary, 'Diddy: Making of a Bad Boy', included statements that NBC Universal either knew were false or published with reckless disregard for the truth in order to defame the founder of Bad Boy Records.

"The entire premise of the Documentary assumes that Mr Combs has committed numerous heinous crimes, including serial murder, rape and sex trafficking of minors and attempts to crudely psychologise him," the complaint said. "It maliciously and baselessly jumps to the conclusion that Mr Combs is a monster' and an embodiment of Lucifer' with a lot of similarities' to Jeffrey Epstein."

NBC Universal and another company that produced the documentary did not respond. The documentary was premiered on Peacock TV.

"From his childhood to becoming a mogul, this raw look at Sean Combs' journey through exclusive footage and candid interviews explores his rise, controversies and the man behind the music," a description of the documentary on Peacock's website reads. —*PTI*

SILENCE'EM TO SUPPRESS'EM

Israel killed two-third of journos slain in '24: CPJ

JERUSALEM, 13 FEB

A record number of journalists were killed in 2024, with Israel responsible for more than two-thirds of those deaths, the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) has said in its annual report.

Announcing its findings on Wednesday, the CPJ said at least 124 journalists were killed in 18 countries last year, in what was the deadliest year for media workers since the committee began keeping records more than three decades ago.

The previous deadliest year for media workers was 2007, when 113 journalists were killed, with almost half of those due to the Iraq war, the press freedom group said.

At least 85 journalists died throughout 2024 at the hands of the Israeli military during Israel's war on Gaza, the CPJ said, with 82 of those who were killed being Palestinians.

The advocacy group also accused Israel of attempting to stifle investigations into the killings, shift blame onto journalists for their own deaths, and ignoring its duty to hold its own military personnel accountable for the killings of so many media workers.

The CPJ named Sudan and Pakistan as the joint second most deadly countries for media workers last year, with six journalists killed in each.

The CPJ said 10 journalists were "murdered" by the Israeli military in Gaza and Lebanon, while the 14 others were assassinated in Haiti, Mexico, Pakistan, Myanmar, Mozambique, India, Iraq, and Sudan. The group said freelance journalists accounted for 43 deaths with 31 of them Palestinians reporting from Gaza. —*Agencies*

The CPJ said at least 124 journalists were killed in 18 countries in 2024, of which around 85 died at the hands of Israeli military during the country's war on Gaza. PHOTO: X

Adani withdraws from $1B Lanka power deal

The project had a rough start with oppn from environmental groups & cases in SC

NEW DELHI, 13 FEB

Adani Green Energy, the renewable arm of billionaire Gautam Adani's conglomerate, has withdrawn from two proposed wind power projects in Sri Lanka, following the Island nation's new government deciding to renegotiate tariffs.

The company was to invest a total of USD 1 billion in generating electricity from wind at two projects and laying transmitting lines to take it to users.

The plan came under the scrutiny of the newly elected administration under President Anura Kumara Dissanayake who wanted to reduce electricity costs.

Adani group, however, continues to be invested in a USD 700 million terminal project at Sri Lanka's largest port in Colombo.

AEGL was originally supposed to develop two wind farms with a total capacity of 484 megawatts in Sri Lanka's Mannar and Pooneryn regions, with an investment of USD 740 million.

The project, slated for completion by mid-2026, had a rough start with Opposition from environmental groups and legal challenges in Sri Lanka's Supreme Court over ecological concerns.

In May last year, Sri Lanka's previous government agreed to purchase power from the proposed Adani wind plant at USD 0.0826 per kilowatt-hour.

The new government began investigating the contract following an indictment against the Adani group founder chairman Gautam Adani and his key associates in a US Court for allegedly paying bribes to Indian officials to secure contracts to supply renewable energy in the country.

Unable to meet the demand, the Adani group has withdrawn from the project.

The group conveyed its decision to the Sri Lankan government on February 12 saying it learnt that a Cabinet-appointed negotiations committee and project committee would be constituted to renegotiate the project proposal. The Board of AGEL deliberated on the issue and decided that while the company fully respects the sovereign rights of Sri Lanka and its choices, it would respectfully withdraw from the said project. —*PTI*

The plan came under the scrutiny of the newly elected administration under President Anura Kumara Dissanayake who wanted to reduce electricity costs **PHOTO: ANI**

Gold rises Rs 140 to reclaim Rs 88,000-mark

NEW DELHI, 13 FEB

Gold prices rose Rs 140 to Rs 88,100 per 10g in the national capital on Thursday amid strong trends in the international markets, according to the All India Sarafa Association.

The precious metal of 99.9 per cent purity had closed at Rs 87,960 per 10g on Wednesday. Gold of 99.5 per cent purity went up Rs 140 to Rs 87,700 per 10 grams from the previous close of Rs 87,560 per 10g.

"Gold recovered from a recent swing bottom and traded higher on Thursday, as haven demand remains intact in response to multiple disruptive tariff announcements by President Trump that are scheduled to be implemented shortly," Saumil Gandhi, Senior Analyst - Commodities at HDFC Securities, said. Silver prices also jumped Rs 800 to Rs 98,000 per kg on Thursday. The white metal had settled at Rs 97,200 per kg in the previous trading session.

Investors remain worried that US President's trade tariffs might trigger a global trade war. —*PTI*

Rupee settles 3 paise higher at 86.92 against USD

MUMBAI, 13 FEB

The rupee settled almost flat with a gain of just 3 paise at 86.92 (provisional) against the US dollar on Thursday as the support from soft American currency and and easing crude oil prices overseas was negated by a lacklustre trend in domestic equities

According to forex traders, the unabated outflow of foreign funds weighed on the Indian currency and capped its recovery even though the greenback weakened after the US data showed higher-than-expected inflation, trimming hopes of a rate cut by the Federal Reserve. At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened stronger at 86.82, touched a high of 86.77 during intraday trade.

However, the unit pared its most gains and touched the day's low of 86.94 before ending the session at 86.92 (provisional) against the American currency, higher by just 3 paise from its previous close. On Wednesday, the domestic unit closed 16 paise lower at 86.95 against the dollar.—*PTI*

Passenger vehicle dispatches rise 1.6% in January

NEW DELHI, 13 FEB

Passenger vehicle dispatches from factories to dealers increased 1.6 pc year-on-year in January at 3,99,386 units, aided by robust demand for utility vehicles, industry Body SIAM said on Thursday. Total passenger vehicle wholesales stood at 3,93,074 units in January last year. Total two-wheeler dispatches increased by 2.1 per cent year-on-year at 15,26,218 units last month as against 14,95,183 units in January 2024, the Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers (SIAM) said in a statement. Total three-wheeler dispatches rose by 7.7 per cent year-on-year to 58,167 units, from 53,991 units in January last year. —*PTI*

LTTS, Altair launch 5G-6G wireless CoE in Bengaluru

NEW DELHI, 13 FEB

L&T Technology Services (LTTS) and Nasdaq-listed Altair on Thursday announced the launch of a 5G-6G wireless centre of excellence (CoE) in Bengaluru. By combining Altair's simulation and design tools with LTTS' end-to-end product development and technology services, the CoE will incubate offerings and applications that cut across sectors such as telecommunications, automotive, manufacturing, healthcare, and beyond, a company statement said. —*PTI*

Mkts pare gains to close lower for 7th day

MUMBAI, 13 FEB

Benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty pared early gains to close lower for the seventh straight day on Thursday, dragged by fag-end selling in select IT and banking shares and foreign fund outflows.

The 30-share BSE Sensex dipped 32.11 points or 0.04 per cent to settle at 76,138.97. The index stayed in the positive zone for the most part of the session. The benchmark gyrated 751.1 points between the day's high of 76,764.53 and low of 76,013.43.

The NSE Nifty slipped 13.85 points or 0.06 per cent to 23,031.40.

From the 30-share blue-chip pack, Adani Ports, Infosys, Tata Consultancy Services, State Bank of India, Nestle and Titan were among the laggards.

Sun Pharma, Tata Steel, Bajaj Finserv, Bajaj Finance, Kotak Mahindra Bank and Zomato were the biggest gainers.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 4,969.30 crore on Wednesday, according to exchange data.

Continuing the downward trend, retail inflation fell to a five-month low of 4.31 per cent in January, mainly due to a decline in the prices of vegetables, eggs, and pulses.

In Asian markets, Seoul and Tokyo settled in the positive territory while Shanghai and Hong Kong ended lower.

European markets were trading on a mixed note. US markets ended mostly lower on Wednesday.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude declined 0.94 per cent to USD 74.47 a barrel.

The BSE Sensex, which had tanked more than 900 points intra-day on Wednesday, ended at 76,171.08, down by 122.52 points or 0.16 per cent. The Nifty dipped 26.55 points or 0.12 per cent to 23,045.25, marking its sixth straight day of losses. —*PTI*

Microsoft opens campus in Hyderabad

HYDERABAD, 13 FEB

Telangana Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy on Thursday inaugurated a new campus of Microsoft as the company celebrates its journey of 25 years in Hyderabad.

The state-of-the-art 1.1 million sq ft LEED-certified building at Gachibowli in the city's IT hub would house 2,500 additional employees.

Microsoft employs over 20,000 professionals in India, over half of which work in Hyderabad. With the launch of the new building, Microsoft plans to hire another 4,800 employees, an official release said.

On the occasion, Microsoft also announced another landmark initiative in partnership with the Government of Telangana to impart AI training to over 1.2 lakh people in the state. Under the first program ADVANTA(I)GE TELANGANA, Microsoft is launching an AI Foundations Academy to introduce AI education to 500 government schools benefiting 50,000 students, it said.

Additionally, the AI-Industry Pro programme will upskill 20,000 industry professionals across Telangana.

The third programme AI-Govern initiative will further train 50,000 government officials in critical areas such as digital productivity, Generative AI and cybersecurity.

Microsoft will also establish and operate an AICoE (AI Centre of Excellence) in collaboration with the Government of Telangana and other stakeholders.

The CoE will establish cloud-based infrastructure for AI development including a centralized AI Knowledge Hub.

To support the growth of AI, Microsoft has further announced doubling of its investments in hyperscale AI data centers in the state with an additional investment of Rs 15,000 crore in the coming years.

This will make Hyderabad region one of the largest data hubs of Microsoft globally. —*PTI*

The report noted that a seasonal decline in food prices has contributed to a lower Consumer Price Index (CPI) inflation rate **PHOTO: PTI**

Chevron to set up $1B India plant

NEW DELHI, 13 FEB

Energy giant Chevron is setting up a USD 1-billion engineering and innovation centre in India, its second biggest in the world, as it looks to tap the country's engineering and technology talent to support its global operations and projects, its India head Akshay Sahni said.

The Chevron Engineering and Innovation Excellence Center (ENGINE) in Bengaluru is not a back office but a centre that will do works ranging from understanding geology for oil and gas production and carbon storage to developing digital twins for oil refineries and advanced process monitoring to improve supply reliability, he said on the sidelines of the India Energy Week here.

It will be the company's largest centre outside of the US.

Chevron ENGINE aims to hire 600 employees by the end of 2025, with further expansion planned, building a diverse and inclusive workforce that will address today's energy demands while contributing to a lower-carbon future, he said.

The recruitment drive is progressing as planned, targeting mechanical, chemical, petroleum, civil, structural, electrical, and computer science engineers, as well as geologists and environmental science majors.

Employees will work with cutting-edge technologies, including AI, IoT, and edge computing, enhancing their technical expertise while collaborating with seasoned experts worldwide to advance key projects. —*PTI*

It will be the company's largest centre outside of the US **PHOTO: PTI**

GOVT ENDS DUTY-FREE IMPORT OF YELLOW PEAS

NEW DELHI, 13 FEB

The government will not extend duty-free import of yellow peas beyond February, Food and Consumer Affairs Minister Pralhad Joshi said on Thursday.

The matter will be discussed in a Group of Ministers (GoM) meeting headed by Union Minister Amit Shah scheduled on Thursday.

The government had allowed the duty-free import of yellow peas in December 2023 and subsequently extended it thrice till 28 February.

Meanwhile, India Pulses and Grain Association (IPGA) Chairman Bimal Kothari said the government may impose restrictions on yellow peas import in the interest of farmers.

India's yellow peas import stood at 30 lakh tonnes. —*PTI*

DEAL FAILS

Honda, Mitsubishi Nissan end merger talks

TOKYO, 13 FEB

Japanese automakers Honda, Nissan and Mitsubishi said Thursday they are ending talks on business integration.

Nissan Chief Executive Makoto Uchida said the talks had changed focus from setting up a joint holding company to making Nissan into a subsidiary of Honda.

"The intent was to join forces to win in the global competition, but this was not going to realise Nissan's potential, so I could not accept it," he told reporters. He said that Nissan was going to aim for a turnaround without Honda instead.

Honda Chief Executive Toshihiro Mibe said in a separate news conference that Honda had suggested a stock swap to speed up decision-making.

"I am really disappointed," Mibe told reporters. "I felt the potential was great, but I also knew actions that would bring pain were necessary to realise that." The automakers agreed to end their agreement on considering a structure for a collaboration, a joint statement said. The decision was passed by board meetings at each of the companies.

Honda Motor Co. and Nissan Motor Corp. announced in December that they were going to hold talks to set up a joint holding company. Mitsubishi Motors Corp. had said it was considering joining that group.

From the start, the effort had analysts puzzled as to the advantages to any of the companies, as their model lineups and strengths overlap in an industry shaken by the arrival of powerful newcomers like Tesla and BYD, as well as the move to electrification.

Honda and Nissan initially said they were trying to finalise an agreement by June and set up the holding company by August.

The three automakers will continue to work together on electric vehicles and smart cars, such as autonomous driving, they said Thursday.

In recent weeks, Japanese media had various reports about the talks breaking down, citing unidentified sources. Some said Nissan balked at becoming a minor player in the partnership with Honda.

Mibe denied he knew or heard anything about the media speculation that Taiwan's Foxconn was considering taking a stake in Nissan.

Uchida also denied have held any official talks with Foxconn but stressed that various options will be considered as Nissan attempts a turnaround, promising a more detailed turnaround plan within a month. —*PTI*

Nexus acquires B'luru's Vega City Mall for ₹913 cr

NEW DELHI, 13 FEB

Nexus Select Trust has acquired Vega City Mall in Bengaluru for an enterprise value of Rs 913 crore.

Nexus Select Trust is India's first publicly listed retail Real Estate Investment Trust (REIT). In a regulatory filing on Thursday, Nexus Select Trust informed that the company has closed the acquisition of Vega City Mall, a Grade-A shopping mall, in Bengaluru for a total enterprise value of Rs 913 crore.

This includes a purchase consideration of Rs 869.75 crore and a balance towards planned capex, including renewables, and closing costs.

With this acquisition, Nexus Select Trust has four assets in Bengaluru. Nexus Select Trust portfolio comprises 18 Grade-A shopping malls with a Gross Leasable Area of 10.4 million square feet spread across 14 cities in India, two complementary hotel assets (354 keys) and three office assets with a Gross Leasable Area of 1.3 million square feet. —*PTI*

REALTORS RAISE ₹22,320CR IN 2024 VIA QIP: ANAROCK

NEW DELHI, 13 FEB

Real estate developers raised about Rs 22,320 crore fund last calendar year by selling equity shares to investors through the Qualified Institutional Placement (QIP) route, according to Anarock.

Real estate consultant Ananrock data showed that the total fund raised through the QIP route across all sectors peaked in 2024 with 99 issues raising nearly Rs 1,41,482 crore.

Real estate was a dominant contributor with 8 developers & 1 REIT collectively raising Rs 22,320 crore, a 16 per cent share in the overall fund raise through QIP. As per the data, the overall fundraising via QIPs across sectors in 2024 was 75 per cent higher than the previous all-time high of Rs 80,816 crore in 2020. Godrej Properties raised Rs 6,000 crore, followed by Prestige Estates Rs 5,000 crore, Brookfield India REIT Rs 3,500 crore and Macrotech Rs 3,300 crore. —*PTI*

WITH SOFTENED PRICES

RBI's inflation target feasible: BoB

NEW DELHI, 13 FEB

India's inflation outlook appears favourable, with the possibility of aligning with the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) 4 per cent target in the coming months, highlighted a report by Bank of Baroda.

The report noted that a seasonal decline in food prices, particularly in vegetables, along with better supply management policies, has contributed to a lower Consumer Price Index (CPI) inflation rate.

It said "If volatile items of CPI especially vegetable inflation continue to play in favour, alignment to the inflation target seems feasible. Our forecast also looks at progressive alignment to the 4 per cent level".

The report stated that headline CPI inflation in January has benefitted from the seasonal correction in food prices. Measures taken to manage the supply of essential food items have played a crucial role in containing inflationary pressures.

It also added that in a time of global policy uncertainty, the lower-than-expected inflation figures provide relief from a monetary policy perspective.

Food inflation in January has eased due to seasonal factors and improved supply-side conditions.

The report mentioned that the high-frequency price data for February 2025 shows a continued softening in prices, especially for tomatoes and potatoes, which have seen a sharp decline.Additionally, core inflation remains insulated, meaning that price pressures outside food and fuel remain stable. —*PTI*

The report noted that a seasonal decline in food prices has contributed to a lower Consumer Price Index (CPI) inflation rate **PHOTO: PTI**

Odisha FC eye 7th win against Hyderabad FC

BHUBANESWAR, 13 FEB

With a top-six finish and a play-offs berth at stake, Odisha FC would be wary of facing Hyderabad FC in their home Indian Super League (ISL) match here on Thursday. Riding on 26 points from 20 matches, courtesy six victories, six losses and eight draws, Odisha FC are currently at seventh place and they would aim to notch as many wins as possible with just three matches left after Friday's game to make it to the top-six, which will allow them feature in the play-offs. Hyderabad FC, on the other hand, have endured a struggling season, since they are currently occupying the last but one place with 16 points from 19 matches on the back of four wins and draws each. *—PTI*

PHOTO:ANI

Bahutule appointed Rajasthan Royals spin-bowling coach

JAIPUR, 13 FEB

Former India cricketer Sairaj Bahutule was on Thursday appointed Rajasthan Royals' spin-bowling coach for the upcoming IPL season, adding to the long list of support staff led by head coach Rahul Dravid. Bahutule, a former leg-spinner and left-hand batter, played two Tests and eight ODIs taking a total of five wickets but his exploits in first-class cricket put him in the league of domestic greats. Bahutule, 52, scored over 6,000 runs and took 630 wickets, besides 197 scalps in List A games. "The 52-year-old had been a part of the Royals from 2018 to 2021. He represented India in two Tests and eight ODIs and has since transitioned into a successful coach," said a statement from RR. *—PTI*

Arsenal forward Kai Havertz injured in training in Dubai

LONDON, 13 FEB

Arsenal's Premier League title challenge has been dealt a blow after forward Kai Havertz was injured during a training camp in Dubai. He tore his hamstring and was set for a lengthy layoff, reports said on Thursday. Arsenal has not confirmed the injury. The loss of Havertz would leave manager Mikel Arteta desperately short of attacking options with Gabriel Jesus out for the season after ACL surgery. Bukayo Saka and Gabriel Martinelli are also down with hamstring injuries. Arteta wanted to sign a forward during the January transfer window, with Aston Villa's Ollie Watkins a reported target. "And we haven't achieved that so we are disappointed in that sense," Arteta said. Arsenal is second in the Premier League, seven points behind leader Liverpool. *—PTI*

Rybakina disappointed by Vukov's suspension

DOHA, 13 FEB

Elena Rybakina on Wednesday said she was "disappointed" with the WTA Tour's decision to ban her former coach Stefano Vukov following the governing body's investigation into a potential breach of its code of conduct. "I'm just disappointed with the situation, and how the process went. I'm not going to comment much on that anymore," she said. On Tuesday, the WTA said it had completed its investigation on Vukov and that his suspension "remains in place." It did not specify how much longer he would remain banned. The Croatian coach, who had been under a provisional suspension, has denied wrongdoing. Rybakina, the 2022 Wimbledon champion, said last month that Vukov "never mistreated" her in last years and that she disagreed with the suspension. *—PTI*

RAJAT PATIDAR NAMED RCB CAPTAIN FOR IPL 2025

He captained MP in Syed Mushtaq Ali, Vijay Hazare Trophies

BENGALURU, 13 FEB

IPL franchise Royal Challengers Bengaluru on Thursday named Rajat Patidar as its captain for the upcoming season starting 21 March, replacing South African Faf du Plessis, who was released from the squad last year.

Patidar was among RCB's retained players before the mega auction in November, 2024 and has the experience of leading Madhya Pradesh in the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy (T20) and the Vijay Hazare Trophy (ODI).

The 31-year-old, who signed up with the franchise in 2022, guided Madhya Pradesh to the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy final where his side lost to Mumbai by five wickets last year.

"Rajat has the simplicity, (he) cares about the people around him, we have closely seen how he has led Madhya Pradesh, we really liked it," RCB chief coach Andy Flower said.

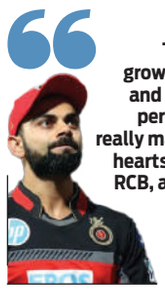
The right-hander was also the second highest run-getter in the premier domestic T20 tournament, behind Ajinkya Rahane, scoring 428 from 10 matches at an average of 61 and a strike-rate of 186.08.

Patidar takes over from du Plessis, who was released after captaining the team from 2022 to 2024 *PHOTO: X*

Patidar takes over from du Plessis, who was released after captaining the team from 2022 to 2024. The 40-year-old South African will play for Delhi Capitals this season.

Prior to the announcement on Thursday, there was some speculation about Virat Kohli returning as captain of the franchise.

Kohli was the RCB captain from 2013 to 2021 and has a fine record though he could not land them the title. *—PTI*



> The way you have grown in the franchise and the way you have performed, you have really made a place in the hearts of all the fans of RCB, all over India. This is very well deserved
>
> -Virat Kohli, Indian cricketer

Kohli doesn't need the cap to lead: Bobat

Virat Kohli does not require the "captaincy title" to be in charge because of his natural penchant for leadership and it will benefit new skipper Rajat Patidar, reckons Mo Bobat, the team director of Royal Challengers Bengaluru.

"Virat was an option (for captaincy). I know that the fans would have probably leaned towards Virat in the first instance. But my point on Virat would be that Virat doesn't need a captaincy title to lead," Bobat said in a media interaction here.

"Leadership, as we've all seen, is one of his strongest instincts. I think it just comes naturally to him. He leads regardless.But we've seen a lot of love for Rajat too," Bobat added. *—PTI*

Nakamura beats Gukesh; Keymer shocks Carlsen

HAMBURG, 13 FEB

World Champion D Gukesh's quest for a victory continued as Hikaru Nakamura defeated him in the tie-breaker of the 5-8 place play-off at the Freestyle Chess Grand slam on Wednesday.

Gukesh was outsmarted in the second game of the tie-breaker after gaining a good advantage with his white pieces.

Gukesh made one tactical error and Nakamura pounced on it to reach the fifth-place play-off with Nodirbek Abdusattorov of Uzbekistan.

The Indian will fight it out against Alireza Firouzja of France.

In the first game (Classic mode) of the two-game tie-breaker, Gukesh had to defend an inferior position with black.

It was only in the endgame that Gukesh managed to find some foothold before agreeing to the inevitable draw.

Nakamura defeated Gukesh in the tie-breaker of the 5-8 place play-off *PHOTO: FREESTYLECHESSGRANDSLAMTOUR*

But the day belonged to Vincent Keymer who scripted a brilliant 1.5-0.5 victory over top-rated Magnus Carlsen of Norway.

Having won the first game in the tie-break, Keymer was just a draw away from sealing his berth to the finals and he didn't disappoint the local fans either.

Carlsen was put under pressure right from the word go despite having the white pieces and by move nine itself Keymer enjoyed an optical advantage.

Carlsen fought back and even seized back the initiative for a short while but Keymer neutralised the position after an unforced error. *—PTI*

3 Pak cricketers fined for breaching ICC Code of Conduct

KARACHI, 13 FEB

International Cricket Council (ICC) has slapped Pakistan's Shaheen Afridi, Saud Shakeel and Kamran Ghulam with fines and a demerit point each for their belligerent behaviour during the tri-series match against South Africa here.

Shaheen was fined 25 per cent of his match fee for breaching Article 2.12 of the Code, which pertains to "inappropriate physical contact with a Player, Player Support Personnel, Umpire, Match Referee or any other person (including a spectator) during an International Match."

The incident occurred in the 28th over of South Africa's innings when Shaheen deliberately obstructed batter Matthew Breetzke as he ran a single, resulting in physical contact and a heated exchange.

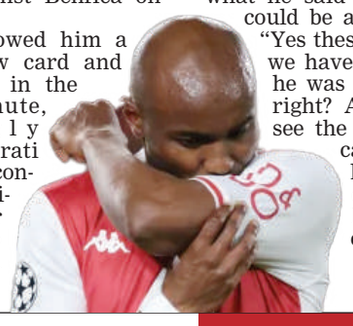
In another incident, Shakeel and substitute fielder Ghulam were fined 10 percent of their match fees for celebrating too closely to batter Temba Bavuma following his run-out in the 29th over. *—PTI*

Monaco loses to Benfica; Musrati gets a red card

MONACO, 13 FEB

Monaco midfielder Al Musrati got a harsh-looking red card from referee Maurizio Mariani early in the second half of a Champions League playoff first leg against Benfica on Wednesday.

Mariani showed him a second yellow card and sent him off in the 52nd minute, seemingly because Musrati appeared to contest his decision after Alvaro Carreras had fouled Monaco striker Breel Embolo. He pushed Embolo to the ground and a foul was given to Monaco.



Monaco coach Adi Hütter said, "I didn't see him walk to the referee. The only thing what he said maybe was It could be a yellow card."

"Yes these are the rules we have to accept, but he was not aggressive right? And when you see the second yellow card of Zakaria, he is suspended. These are harsh yellow cards." *—PTI*

Tete confident about FIH Pro League

> We had a disappointing season last time but I feel we are well-trained and prepared to do better this time around

BHUBANESWAR, 13 FEB

India's women's hockey captain Salima Tete is confident that her team will give an improved performance when the Bhubaneswar leg of FIH Pro League commences on Saturday and will not be pulled back by its disastrous showing in the previous season.

India will open their campaign against England at the Kalinga Hockey Stadium, hoping to erase the memories of an eighth-place finish last season, where they ended up only ahead of the United States.

The other teams in fray here are Germany, Spain and world No.1 Netherlands.

India scored only 16 goals last season in comparison to champions Netherlands, who smashed a mind-boggling 63 goals.

The country is currently ranked ninth in the world, while powerhouse Germany are fourth, England seventh and Spain eighth.

"We had a disappointing season last time but I feel we are well-trained and prepared to do better this time around," said Tete ahead of the India leg.

India will begin their campaign in the Pro League with two matches against England on 15 and 16 February, followed by clashes against Spain on 18 and 19 February. *—PTI*

AFTER BGT LOSS

Families not to travel with Team India for CT

NEW DELHI, 13 FEB

Families will not be accompanying the Indian cricket players heading to Dubai on 15 February for the ICC Champions Trophy as the BCCI's new travel policy comes into effect for the first time with this tournament.

The Indian team starts its campaign in Dubai against Bangladesh on 20 February, followed by the marquee clash against arch-rivals Pakistan (23 February) and the final preliminary face-off with New Zealand on 2 March. The Rohit Sharma-led squad will play its games in Dubai while the rest of the tournament unfolds from 19 February in Pakistan across three venues.

Given that the duration of the tour is just over three weeks even if the final on 9 March is taken into consideration, the BCCI will not allow families to accompany the players. As per the new policy, families can be with players for a maximum of two weeks during a tour which is of 45 days or more.

As per the new policy, families can be with players for a maximum of two weeks during a tour of 45 days or more *PHOTO: X*

"If anything changes then it is different but as of now, the players are unlikely to be accompanied by their wives or partners for this tour. One of the senior players had enquired about it and he was told that the policy decision will be followed," a senior BCCI source told PTI on conditions of anonymity.

The BCCI policy document states: "Players absent from India for more than 45 days during overseas tours can be joined by their partners and children (under 18) for one visit per series (format wise) of up to a two-week period. The new rules were drafted after India's horror tour of Australia during which the team was outplayed 1-3, leading to speculation about lack of discipline and cohesion in the dressing room. *—PTI*

NATIONAL GAMES

Karnataka registered a hard-fought 3-2 victory over Uttar Pradesh to win the gold *PHOTO: X/@ INDIASPORTSHUB*

Haryana, K'taka win gold in women's and men's hockey

HARIDWAR, 13 FEB

Haryana took revenge of their last edition defeat as they beat Madhya Pradesh 4-1 in the final to win the women's hockey gold medal at the National Games here on Thursday.

Madhya Pradesh's Chavan Aishwarya scored off a penalty corner in the fifth minute to hand her side an early lead in the summit clash. However, they failed to hold onto the advantage and allowed Haryana to pump in four goals.

In the men's event, Karnataka registered a hard-fought 3-2 victory over Uttar Pradesh to win the gold.

Faraz Khan converted a penalty corner in the opening minute of the match for UP, while Karnataka's Shamanth C found the back of the net in the eighth minute to level the scores 1-1. Bharath Mahalingappa Kurtakoti (18th) and Abharan Sudev (39th) scored off penalty corners to give two-goal cushion to Karnataka.

Meanwhile, Haryana's teenaged pistol shooter Suruchi, who has caused a flutter after winning seven gold at the shooting nationals and then a couple more at the National Games, swept aside a top domestic line-up to win the women's 10m air pistol trial here on Thursday.

In the day's first final, Indian Navy's Kiran Ankush Jadhav, who stunned two Olympians in the finals of the nationals, did an encore on way to winning the men's 3P final with a total tally of 460.0 points.

In the men's 10m air pistol competition, it was the Army's turn to bag top honours as national champion Varun Tomar shot 243.2 in the final to emerge winner. Teammate Ajendra Singh Chauhan was second while Rajasthan's Amit Sharma finished third. *—PTI*

India bow to Korea in Asia Mixed Team

QINGDAO, 13 FEB

Indian shuttlers went down to South Korea 2-3 in a Group D tie of the Badminton Asia Mixed Team Championshi. Mixed doubles pair of Dhruv Kapila and Tanisha Crasto started the proceedings by winning opening game 21-11, but lost the next two 12-21, 15-21 to go down in 56 minutes.

India's Malvika Bansod went down without a fight 9-21, 10-21 against Sim Yu Jin. Chennai shuttler Sathish Karunakaran, however, pulled one back following a hard-fought win over Cho Geonyeop 17-21, 21-18, 21-19 in one hour 12 minutes, before the women's doubles pair of Treesa Jolly and Gayatri Gopichand brought India on an even keel following a 19-21, 21-16, 21-11 win over Kim Min Ji and Kim Yu Jung.

The deciding fifth game saw MR Arjun and Satwiksairaj Rankireddy losing to Sung Seung and Jin Yong 14-21, 15-23 in 53 minutes. *—PTI*

Delhi Open Tennis: Kopriva, Harris enter singles quarters

NEW DELHI, 13 FEB

Top seed Vit Kopriva and Billy Harris continued their strong runs at the Delhi Open tennis tournament, sealing their berths in the men's singles quarterfinals with comfortable wins over their respective opponents.

World no. 127 Kopriva of Czech Republic secured a 6-4 6-1 victory over compatriot Dalibor Svrcina to reach the last eight round. Later in the day, he teamed up with Hynek Barton in the doubles event, producing another 6-4 6-1 win over Kris Van Wyk and Eric Vanshelboim to book a spot in the semifinals.

Second seed Harris defeated Australian James McCabe in straight sets, confirming his place in the men's singles quarterfinals. Sweden's Elias Ymer, who entered the singles event as a special exempt, set up a quarterfinal clash against Harris after defeating Egor Agafanov in straight sets.

In an intense singles battle on the Centre Court, sixth seed Mochizuki overcame a slow start to rally past Barton, sealing a 2-6 6-4 6-3 victory

Meanwhile, men's doubles second seeds Niki Kaliyanda Poonacha of India and Courtney John Lock of Zimbabwe progressed to the semifinals with hard-fought win in a nail-biting contest against Japan's Shintaro Mochizuki and Kaito Uesugi.

Masamichi Imamura and Rio Noguchi ensured Japanese representation in the semifinals, dispatching Enzo Couacaud and Kelsey Stevenson in straight sets.

Third seeds Jay Clarke and Johannes Ingildsen ousted Michael Geerts and Kimmer Coppejans 4-6 6-2 10-5. *—PTI*